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**THE  
VISION OF ASIA**



**By L. CRANMER-BYNG**

*Joint Editor of the Wisdom of the East Series*

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**SALMA.** A Play in Three Acts.

**THE CLASSICS OF CONFUCIUS.**

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**A FEAST OF LANTERNS.**

*Wisdom of the East Series.*

THE  
VISION OF ASIA  
An Interpretation of Chinese Art  
and Culture

By  
L. CRANMER-BYNG, F.R.S.A.  
 *Hon. Member of The China Society*

With a Foreword by  
The Rt. Hon. R. A. BUTLER, M.P.

*The Art of Life  
lies in the ability to see the Flame*

LONDON  
JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET, W.

FIRST EDITION . . . MAY 1932  
CHEAP EDITION . . . AUGUST 1934  
REPRINTED . . . . . 1939

Dedicated  
to the memory of my friend  
L. ADAMS BECK  
who inspired this  
book

*The values of East and West do not clash. They are supplementary and interchangeable; and it will be well for the world when this is fully realized, and there is free circulation of thought. The faith of a nation is her soul. Her literature is her intellect. Nations who do not meet on these grounds cannot understand one another, and understanding is the most vital need of the present day.*

L. ADAMS BECK  
*The Story of Oriental Philosophy.*



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## FOREWORD

THIS book is the work of one who has been a credit to the intellectual life of his home county of Essex for many years, and has devoted what time he can spare from his public service in the interests of Education to editing the 'Wisdom of the East' series. So long an experience has given him the opportunity of attempting to discuss the contribution that the Far East has made to establishing an Art of Life. Within one canvas he has managed to combine many centuries and many ideas, and yet in the midst of the erudite scholarship with which this book abounds he has had time to come to grips with the facts of our period. Perhaps one of the vital points of the age in which we live is the use of Leisure. This is the experience of all classes in the community. The unemployed find that leisure hangs heavily upon their hands, and it is freely acknowledged that many of them do not know how to spend their leisure time. The intellectual classes, as is shown by this book, find that the philosophies that they have inherited from the classics are not standing the strain of our modern existence. It is interesting therefore to find the author turning to a period during the twelfth century in order to show an example to the world of how to spend one's leisure and how to live one's life. There have been two other books of recent years published which turned to the East as an example for the West. The first is 'The Idealist View of Life,' by Radha-



krishnan, who is freely mentioned in Mr. Cranmer-Byng's book, and the other is 'An Essay on India,' by Robert Byron. This last study asks the important question as to whether the contact of Great Britain with India is not one of the great issues in the history of the world. In India two civilizations—the Materialism from the West and the Discipline of the mind from the East—have perhaps come together to produce something for the joint benefit of mankind? Professor Radhakrishnan discusses with the immense force of his experience the question of Discipline of the mind, and this discipline of the mind is precisely that ideal put forward by Mr. Cranmer-Byng. It can be exercised by the highest and the lowest among us, 'for Leisure is the opening of a cage setting man free to build his dreams and aspirations into realities. It confers upon him the freedom of the Universe, and gives value to the meaning of variety, but the West is totally unprepared for the coming of the leisure state.'

Some very valuable summaries of knowledge are given for those who desire to understand what the philosophy of the East is. The rival merits of Confucius, Buddha, and Tao are discussed on page 55. There is a valuable contrast between Christianity and Chinese Philosophy on pages 224 and 225. The book is throughout written in a very figured, and in some places flowery, style, which is sustained on the whole throughout and has its defects just as it has its great merits. 'Youth paints and forgets,' he says. 'Age walks in the silent gallery remembering,' and there is much of interest to the youth of England in his description of

the students in the East being filled full of ideals, many of which they cannot digest, and putting paper moons which they can admire on the walls of their classrooms. The description of the life of the citizens of Hanchow, where the entire society of 'this happy floating crowd' is neither vexed nor miserable, must give great satisfaction to minds dulled and clouded by the problems and miseries of our overcrowded cities. The book, in fact, takes one away, and yet never sufficiently far away from things of every day. There is a chance for recreation and for inspiration in the past of this country China, which Mr. Cranmer-Byng reminds us is remembered by that commodity from which we sip our tea every day—china. And the delightful frontispiece from a coloured print of the seventeenth century, an unfaded Ming copy, makes the book a valuable one to possess. As the author says, the art of painting matures more slowly than the art of literature. The conception of the book is on the level of a great painting, and one trusts that the type of literature bringing East and West together, of which this book is an example, will mature as beautifully as has the painting in the frontispiece.

R. A. BUTLER.



## PREFACE

THE quotation on the title-page of this book <sup>1</sup> is the key to all that follows, to a vision of a golden age that was greater, in many aspects, than the golden age of Athens under Pericles, and a reinterpretation of the ideals that underlay Chinese art, literature, and life itself during the eventful years between A.D. 618 and 1278. Art may truly be called 'the flower of life,' but, as Evan Morgan points out, 'the Art of Life lies in the ability to see the flame.' It is the burning bush in which Moses saw God that matters, and not the Ten Commandments engraved on stone. The average man has been taught for centuries in the West to take his religion at second-hand instead of going direct to the source. The way of insight is the way of approach to the Great Unity which the Chinese call Tao. Through insight we enter into the brotherhood of life and apprehend the transcendence of God. Man is a co-worker with God the World-Spirit in the divine transformation of the Universe. But the majority see nothing beyond the surface and the outward form of things, and 'they act under the emotion of the senses.' So Mrs Browning defines the whole attitude

<sup>1</sup> From a paper read before the China Society by the Rev. Evan Morgan, on Huai-Nan Tzū, an ancient Chinese philosopher of the 2nd century, B.C.

of the Chinese Taoist in contrast to that of the mere sensualist :

‘ All earth’s crammed with heaven  
And every common bush afire with God,  
But only he who sees takes off his shoes,  
The rest sit round and pluck blackberries.’

The art of China is based on her ancient religious philosophy of insight and adjustment of the unit into Unity. In co-operation with the Creator man himself becomes a creator : his destiny is to create in order that life more abundant may ensue. Whatever he attempts in this direction is not necessarily a work of art, but in the process of creation he becomes an artist and his contribution is himself. All that he undertakes in leisure, using his ‘ talents,’ not for the sake of reward but for the joy of self-expression, the freedom to move in spheres which are illimitable, or subject only to the limitations of self, is in the nature of art. And if it does not appeal to the world but to him alone, he has exercised his talent and thus attained a greater fullness of life. Art and leisure are not the privileges of the few but the necessity of all. For leisure is the opening of a cage setting man free to build his dreams and aspirations into realities. It confers upon him the freedom of the Universe and gives value to the meaning of variety. But the West is totally unprepared for the coming of the Leisure State. China and Japan are the two nations where the artistic and creative impulse was developed to the full ; and the art of life reached its zenith in the T’ang and Sung periods of China and

the Ashikaga of Japan. And in all their art no attempt is made to imitate or reproduce, however faithfully, in detail the object of their desire. The artist allows the life without him to penetrate within, and from the mingling of two vital flames new life is engendered and produced in new form. Since the Universal Spirit pervades all things, there is nothing that is incapable of co-operating in the purpose of Creation. And the final test of every work of art lies in the appeal of its vitality to ours ; not in the flower but in the flame that kindles it into beauty and ourselves into recognition and response. Thus the art of life consists not merely in the ability to see the flame but to bear the flame, to liberate and let it pass from us into a future beyond our day.

## NOTE

SINCE this book was first published in 1932 certain allusions to current politics on pages 4 and 11 have suffered the common fate of such attempts to describe events that were written large in their day, and now are little more than historical records of failure and a warning to future generations. France is no longer the successor of Imperial Rome controlling world-policy through the League of Nations. Germany, leagued with Italy, has taken her place, and the empty palaces of 'peace' at Geneva are echoing with out-worn slogans. Military alliances for 'collective security' are once more arranged in the Chancelleries of Europe. The Bolshevist menace has, temporarily, given way

to the Nazi and Fascist ; tribalism, lawless and uncontrolled, instead of international class-warfare. But the end of pagan self-worship and lust for world-dominion, whether of nation, class or individual, is ever the same, and the spoils of conquest turn to dead sea-fruit. And all that prophets have foretold or historians recorded of empires brought to ruin, and monuments sunk to little mounds of grass are summed up in two lines of the Chinese poet Wang Po :—

‘What is their royal builder now ?  
A Lord of Dust ? An Emperor of Dreams ?’

L. C.-B., 1939.

*Note.*—The frontispiece here reproduced is taken from a colour print of the seventeenth century, since the masterpieces of the older dynasties are mostly too blurred to give the general public much idea of the joyous spirit they displayed in line and colour. So for the faded T'ang and Sung original we must substitute the yet unfaded Ming copy, where the tradition of flower and bird studies, begun by Hsü Hsi in the tenth century, was faithfully carried on, and the vital impulse of this great colourist still lingered.

## CHAPTER I

### THE IDEALS OF THE WEST

Is there an Art of Life, and if so, whence does it derive, of what material is it wrought, and by what methods shall we achieve it? Shall we find it in the West, as centuries of Greek scholars have proclaimed, or does the East maintain her guardianship of an ancient mystery revealed only to initiates? Or is there yet another aspect overlooked by partisans of both schools—the possibility that neither West nor East holds any more than one half of a broken talisman which, welded together, opens on Life beyond the factory wall of civilization? The answer to the first question draws East and West together, speaking as one—‘Life lived fully from individual centre to social circumference is an Art.’ Then modern imperialism interposes with ‘East is East and West is West,’ and the protagonists move asunder. For the sources and material of both appear to differ profoundly, and their methods of moulding, weaving and reshaping are, more often than not, world-apart.

First we must return to the primal source of Western ideals, which is neither Jerusalem nor Rome but Athens and the sacred soil of Attica, the birthplace of a nation of supreme idealists. Christianity appears later. It tempers what it has never forged. St Paul goes to school in the classrooms of Hellas and, in all things anticipated by



Plato, learns the lesson of spirit and flesh in opposition. His convert and friend Dionysius,<sup>1</sup> Bishop of the Athenians, is moved by older echoes of the Greek *good and beautiful* as he kneels in prayer to 'One who is Good above all good, and Beautiful above all beauty.' A little over a hundred years will elapse before Plotinus, in whom the Greek and Christian spirit are united, will go adventuring Eastward and return to leaven the Neoplatonism of Alexandria with Persian and Indian thought. East and West have touched and passed each other in a twilight of mysticism, before the hovering tribal vultures fall on the ripened corn-fields of Roman Peace, and the Eastern skies are stabbed with the scimitar of Islam. Then, here and there in the night of the Dark Ages, some memory of the old adventure drifts like a shaft of moonlight through quiet cloisters and athwart some hermit's cell.

In the year of Our Lord 717, in one of the wildest places of White Britain, in the third watch of the night a vision comes to the lonely anchorite peering through the darkness around him. He has grave doubts concerning the Blessed Trinity and cannot sleep because of them. Suddenly a voice peals forth proclaiming the Doctrine, and Christ Himself illumines the humble cell with His radiance. Human doubts are resolved and flit like shadows over the threshold in the revelation and reassurance of the Master. He is given a little book for his comfort 'in which are greater wonders than mortal heart can conceive.' This is the Book of the Holy Grail, the one unique vision of the West, seeing life

<sup>1</sup> The works attributed to Dionysius are now held to have been written in the 4th century. But the shifting of dates merely confirms the argument over a greater period.

as spiritual adventure whose goal is the fellowship of all men through God, the last scene taking place in the central City of Sarras where Galahad, perfect through his achievement of the Grail, reigns over his brothers, the Saracens.

But the spiritual vision of one hermit is soon to be obscured by the worldly vision of another. Sarras fades before Jerusalem ; the quest must yield to the noise and clamour of the Crusade. This ancient dream of a League of Nations, a brotherhood of man established in peace and goodwill, passes with the tramp of armies moving Eastward. Peter the Hermit, like another Peter, has appealed to the sword, and, unmindful as he of the answer, launches host on host upon the sands of the desert. The authority of the Pope and the power of the priesthood were all on his side. For the recluse who dreams of a Kingdom of God on earth achieved by love is not a priest but a poet, and consequently a heretic. Of all the Crusades, with their brief successes and long disasters, only the Sixth can be said to have achieved its object triumphantly, when in A.D. 1228 Frederick II of Sicily took possession of Jerusalem by treaty with the Sultan without a single blow being struck. But Frederick himself was both a poet and philosopher born centuries before his time.

And the crusading spirit of the West is neither dead nor sleeping. It has merely shifted its aim from Jerusalem to some more profitable place in the sun. There are armies of contending Crusaders whose outposts have already clashed : two outlooks on life which are as different and mutually hostile as those of Christian and Moslem. The first is imperialistic and national, the second is a class movement and international. The Imperi-

alism of to-day is frankly secular, seeking as it does fresh markets for its nationals. Replicas of the great wall of China, whose bricks are tariffs and whose watch-towers vigilant customs, enclose vast areas of virgin soil and potential trade.<sup>1</sup> France and Italy, the successors of Imperial Rome, are foremost in the field. The goal is economic self-sufficiency, and the League of Nations is recalled merely as an international convenience for maintaining the status established in 1919. War is the inevitable outcome of all imperialism, whether it is based on the cult of Cæsar or the economics of modern statesmen.

But the wars of the future are not necessarily struggles for economic supremacy between one nation and another. Other hosts are forming ; the exploited are ranging themselves against the exploiters. The sacred pity of youth for the dispossessed, the economic slave selling his manhood and freedom for the prospect of a distant dole, the righteous indignation against those who neither toil nor spin, and yet possess all things to squander at will, is being enlisted day by day, year by year, under the red banner of class warfare. Every generous impulse to self-sacrifice in the heart of boyhood passing into manhood, all maternity shrined in the heart of a girl, is offered up on the political altar. And the final goal is a system not of progress but of retrogression, back to the communal self of the tribe. In a little book too seldom read, Edmond Holmes has summed up the reason for the failure of the tribe :

‘ The community claimed the whole of what is potentially infinite, man’s capacity for self-sacrifice ; and in making this claim upon it, it directed it

<sup>1</sup> See note to Preface, p. xv.

towards a finite end. This was the capital offence of tribalism ; and it was because of this that it perished.'

Reading backward, reading forward, the end is the same. Adding tribe unto tribe until the world-tribe is achieved, the end is still finite. A religion of humanity is no true religion but an ethic of comfort. The world-cathedral is an over-arching dream whose spires vanish into space, not the bricks and mortar of an economic Babel. Humanity is not enough. Progress, as understood by the West, is mechanical movement, and Politics still a game of cricket, as in England, with the Leaders of the Opposition bowling at His Majesty's Government. There is no sense of proportion in modern human affairs. Humanism, science applied to the problems of work and health, Politics combining both in their national and international aspects—all these are important, none of them all-important.

Three studies are essential to this self-conscious generation—the study of astronomy, putting man into his proper perspective with the Universe ; history written from the angle of world contribution made by nations and empires ; and lastly the individual adjustment of self to neighbour.

One of the most hopeful signs for the future is the growing demand in the public libraries for the latest works of Jeans and Eddington and the intelligent stimulus given to popular lectures on Astronomy by the Wireless Corporations. The need for a deeper and more comprehensive study of history has been eloquently championed by John Hoyland. Speaking of the education of youth in the future World-State he says :

‘ The history lesson will be a time when the child is taught to feel a lively pride in the achievements of humanity as a whole—not only, as during the old national stage of development, in sectional achievements. He will be encouraged to take pride in the past records of his own race or nation ; but that pride will be differently founded, for it will be pride in the service which his race or nation has performed for the sake of all mankind, and in the contribution which it has made towards the well-being of the whole human family. This universal well-being . . . will be set before the child’s mind as the true meaning behind history, and the history course (again in close connection with religious teaching) will form the key and centre of the whole educational system. . . .’

The author rightly insists on the vital importance of religion, since Brotherhood implies Fatherhood, and all human endeavour in the future will depend upon the power of inspiration drawn from the primal source. ‘ That which was born in time will perish in time,’ and a race of upstarts claiming kinship with the beasts alone will do no more than squander its worldly inheritance and vanish as the mastodon, leaving the bones of its civilization strewn along the Hudson, Thames and Seine.

The third study relates to the all-important question of man’s relations with his fellow-man. In the West it is the Cinderella of the other two, and this in spite of Christ’s teaching and His summing up of all that matters in religious tradition. Few Western writers have evolved more than a vision of benevolent Peeping Toms who take in their neighbours’ washing surreptitiously and blush to find it bleached. The whole philosophy of

Confucius' great rival Lao Tzŭ is against this view of virtue by interference. It is not by meddling with our neighbour's boundaries, uprooting his borders, imposing our methods of order and cultivation, that we prevail, but by concentrating on self-growth until, like a grain of mustard-seed, we become a tree of shelter for those around us.

The real progress of life depends not so much upon a Public Health Committee or the promulgation of a law as upon self-development. 'The evolution of life as we experience it,' says J. W. T. Mason, 'indicates that it is by increasing the emphasis upon the self-development of individual personalities that progress is maintained.' This, as we shall endeavour to show, is the real gospel of the East. But the voice of the preacher is 'a still small voice' heard within us, whereas the gospel of interference rises above the roar of Western traffic with its raucous insistence on man the cog-wheel and God the State-Machine. Even Mr H. G. Wells must succumb to the clamour. Arion-like he rides the crest of the Rationalist wave harping Cosmopolis, while the young dolphins of democracy gambol around him. He ushers in the Age of Aluminium, of lightness, brightness, and flexibility in fortnightly parts. He is, as yet, but little interested in the hoarded treasures of the East that are slowly finding their way into the common fund. His joy is in the Eurasian-minded student of India, China and Japan, in the mass movement of pepper-and-salt souls converging to swarm and pullulate on some Alpine slope.

These students have brought nothing with them overseas, except the clothes, boots and bowlers they

stand up in. They frequent the London School of Economics and listen to Harold Laski, but only with a view to absorbing such phrases as will conduce to a state of 'mental and moral excitement.' And every liner outward or inward bound carries its freight of young Daniels come to judgment or returning with airy visions of the world awing and a sackful of slogans. Unfortunately they have profoundly misjudged their teachers. Laski is not an emotional poet but a philosopher whose red light of warning flashes impartially on the old institutions of the Aryan and the old-new of the Tartar. And the undeniable greatness of Wells lies in his flexibility, in his recognition of himself as the child of a changing age, in the judgment that he is continually passing on some earlier Wells, not in his self-contented Utopias with their delicate contempt for the generations who ate their bread in the sweat of their face.

Here and there we are conscious of a force that is making itself felt rather than heard. Europe and America have subscribed to present Albert Schweitzer with an organ in his West African jungle. He comes to us at rare intervals and is booked for organ recitals and lionized by musical folk. The great exponent of Sebastian Bach is forced to drown the music of life in a flood of cantatas. And yet no one has stated the essential need of his age more clearly. The real stress is on the individual and not on the institution or community to which he belongs :

'We have to conduct the fight against the evil element which exists in man, not by judging others, but only by judging ourselves. The conflict with

our own nature, and sincerity towards ourselves, are the instruments with which we work on others. We move silently into the midst of the struggle for that profound spiritual independence which grows from reverence of our own life. True power makes no noise. It is there, and it produces its effect. True ethic begins where the use of words stops.'

And there are other voices beginning to make themselves heard, the voices of scholars speaking beyond their schools, addressing the men and women of all ages and countries as members of the Continuation School of Life. While philosophy is still fumbling at the window-catch, scholarship has opened the door and stepped out into the market-place. Because the Greek spirit was a spirit of youth, it is still immortal and still among us. And the market-place was the schoolroom of the Athenian. The older generation of Greek scholars—for all scholarship of the West derives from Athens—was content to influence the group, a selected band of highly trained young men who in their turn brought the training they had acquired into their profession or calling. Politics, administration, literature, all have gained from the character-built student of the older Universities.

But this will not suffice the new generation. Men like Gilbert Murray and Alfred Zimmern are out for a wider audience than the walls of a classroom, or even the orbit of a University, may encompass. In a word, they have returned to the original Greek idea of publicity in all things, with scholarship, learning and philosophy taking their proper place, influencing men of every race and creed and caste from the high altitudes where the



League of Nations assemblies. They challenge alike the old order of nationalism and the new of class internationalism. Freedom, the Greek ideal of freedom, is for them the very basis of thought and action. R. W. Livingstone has stated their case in a memorable passage which deserves the widest recognition :

‘ From the various follies and sins and ruinous excesses to which he is so prone, man is in most cases guarded on the grounds that it is his duty to fear God and serve his country. Whole classes of actions are forbidden him. He moves in a narrow and carefully-watched round of existence. He may not do this, he must do that. Maimed and mutilated, with one hand or one eye, he enters into the Kingdom of Heaven. This is true of nearly every nation except Greece. Here alone man was not sacrificed to his god or his country, but allowed to see life steadily and see it whole. Elsewhere, reasons of state or reasons of religion perverted inquiry or narrowed its field ; men were forbidden to think at all on some subjects, or compelled to hold certain prescribed views on them. Whole provinces of life were withdrawn from discussion—with many excellent consequences, but also with a restriction of the scope of truth, with a limitation of her chances of finding herself and coming by her own. But for the Greek there were no barriers, no domains set apart where he might not trespass ; everywhere he was free to act and think, to find truth or fall into error, to do right or to sin. In Greece neither religion nor politics were forces preventing him from seeing things as they are.’

And ‘ reasons of state or reasons of religion ’ are the essential dogmas of an international class movement which is at once a political system and a

religion. The sensitive spirit of Greek scholarship is quick to recognize and reveal the true meaning of Russian Communism :

‘ It is a religion like that of the French Revolution of 1789, but more militant and implacable. It has the dogmatism of a religion in its insistence on rewriting all history, all science and art, and—it is said—even mathematics, from the “ proletarian ” standpoint, in its persecution of free thought and of any special individuality of character, in its weapon of “ mass terror,” its religious persecutions. And the disputes between the Second and the Third International have all the depth and venom of religious wars.’

Communism is an inverted Muhammedanism whose motto reads, ‘ *There is no God but economic Determinism, and Marx is the Prophet of God.*’ At least it is a creed with a God, a Prophet and a doctrine of human equality that permeates the world of to-day. Opposed to it are the disunited forces of a dying nationalism. For nationalism as a religion received its mortal wound in the Great War when the ‘ old German God ’ toppled over, revealing feet of clay. The Gods of post-war Europe are lying face downwards in the sand, where they cannot see the *Mene, Mene, Tekel* of economic independence written on their tariff walls. The Island God of Great Britain no longer looks out across the waters watching the keels of Free Import bringing him his daily tribute. There is no tribute for gods dethroned, and meanwhile imports have to be paid for with exports, and the markets of the world are shrinking. Other nations, whose toilers work for less money and longer hours,

have sapped the impregnable positions of British trade at home and abroad. For years the theorist of Manchester has played the part of David in pantomime without an economic stone to fling at the Goliath of mass production across the Atlantic. Now Indian boycott and self-dependence ring the curtain down while Lancashire cotton-spinners crowd the football field.

'Free Trade Within the Empire' is the slogan of the Conservative Party; 'Cheap Food For Dear Commodities' is still the slogan of the Liberal and Labour Party alike. But the time has gone by for the one, and the other is a manifest absurdity. The MacDonalDs, Baldwins and Lloyd Georges have nothing else to offer, and the only other solution, both for Europe and Great Britain, lies apparently in the hands of the Communists. Yet it is no Communist but a brilliant French writer, armed with the deadly and penetrating logic of his race, who turns on the high priests of a dying cult even as St Paul turned on the Athenians :

'To-day, the world has reached a stage of extreme economic concentration. It is now as a living being with its vascular system of railway and shipping lines, its nervous system of telegraphs and cables, its organs of transformation (industrial centres) and of reproduction (banks), its nervous centres (local exchanges) placed under the control of the leading exchanges and issuing banks—which, like the brain, co-ordinate the movements of all the members.

'The Geon is there; he exists and lives within us. Each of us is only one of his cells, although we do not know and do not wish to know. Each member claims to be independent of the others;

and for the disturbance it provokes in the entire organism, the organism retaliates with a vengeance. By making us suffer, the unacknowledged god imposes himself upon our consciousness.

According to the *Acts*, St Paul, on arriving at Athens, was struck with the innumerable number of gods who were dispensing good or bad fortune among the Pagans. He noted also that the wise Greeks, fearing lest any should be forgotten who might wreak revenge for their negligence and send a scourge upon them, had raised an altar to the "Unknown God." St Paul then turned to them and said : " Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, Him declare I unto you." But they did not heed him. The God continued in his course. After three centuries of useless turmoil . . . he had overthrown all the others . . . Likewise the men of to-day, dominated by national polytheistic creeds, refuse to recognize the one and only God. But already his influence has reached every corner of the earth. Indifferent to human wishes, he inspires and directs the economic activity of all the peoples and strikes down those who disregard him.'

But the ' economic solidarity ' in which Delaisi finds the ultimate solution for all international troubles is not enough. It is equally advocated and with equal force by the high priests of a soulless Communism whose final goal, however much they may deny it, is a changeless and stereotyped Internationalism consisting of two classes—the Rulers and the Ruled. Political freedom and free expression of opinion, the very breath of ancient Athens, are stifled in the shadow of the secret police and the State Eavesdropper. Man is brought up to distrust his fellow-man, to guard against all revelation of his intimate thought, to speak only of

things that lie on the surface until the great day dawns when a generation of Abjects is born into the world, to whom freedom and change will mean nothing but the hardship of standing erect and the horror of facing the unknown.

No wonder the inheritors of the Greek Spirit have left the classroom and come out into the market-place. For it is there that they are most needed, speaking to an age that acts without reflection, whose leaders blindly feel their way along the line of least resistance opened up for them by the daily Press. And the crying need of to-day is not merely for thought but for *disinterested* thought which is not enslaved to class or national prejudice. 'Disinterested thought,' says Alfred Zimmern, 'thought, that is, which is directed towards an ideal object, whether the attainment of intellectual truth in some domain or the intellectual analysis of some practical issue—is the very life-blood of a civilized community.'

Gilbert Murray, perhaps the greatest of the modern Athenians, has said no less. But to thought, which 'is the best guide we have, if it is patient, if it is based on study, if unwarped by personal interests,' he has also added the motive power whereby alone it may be translated into action—'the spirit of goodwill.' And in the final summing up he transcends his Greek citizenship and becomes the visionary of a greater Cosmopolis towards which all men of goodwill are blindly groping :

'Need we ask no more? Yes, just a little more. We may ask something of that spirit which, since the very beginning of history, men have expected and found in the average common soldier—a will

to endure hardship for the sake of duty *and to use life as one who knows of things better than life.*

The italics are mine since the conclusions also are mine.

Here we part company with all that is noblest in the Golden Age of Greece and all that is wisest and most far-seeing in the changing Spirit of the West. For Hellenism can give no more to us than 'Beauty, Liberty, Directness, Humanism, Sanity, Many-sidedness.' These are her gifts as set forth by R. W. Livingstone, and few will deny their comprehensiveness. And one by one they have failed us. The smouldering wicks of ancient lamps are guttering in the darkness of the modern world. Here and there on Alpine slopes where the League of Nations assembles are the lights of the watchers awaiting the dawn. And far ahead the cold glimmer of troubled waters and the sea for us. The port of embarkation is at hand.

## CHAPTER II

### EASTWARD BOUND

‘ **LIFE** is a great adventure and not a set scheme ! ’ says Radhakrishnan. With this gesture of farewell we may turn our back on the West, on the clamour of to-day and the challenge of to-morrow, and sail for the sunrise of a thousand years ago. For it is the past of unsullied Asia that we seek and not the present. The Eurasian mind of India, of China or Japan is not our quest. Neither are we seeking a way of escape from conditions which are ours to control if we will and dare. Great adventure is not blind adventure nor haphazard ; there is an object to achieve, a goal toward which we move inevitably. The Greek ideal which runs like a vein of gold through the strata of Europe from the Dark Ages, through Feudalism to the present mechanical age, has failed us. Not because the six precious gifts mentioned by Livingstone have lost their magic and power of inspiration. On the contrary, they are more indispensable than ever. But if we are to use them aright something more is needed, something which the Greeks never possessed, which, in contrast to their day, corresponds with the necessities of ours.

A young, adventurous world engaged in the new work of creation, in the building of environment to correspond with its insurgent spirit, in reaching out, exploring and colonizing and trading had no time

for wisdom. The flower knows nothing of the fruit. Where no period of the seasons has been accomplished the nation has no lesson to learn from the past. Age is an intolerable nuisance, hence the quavering rebellion of the chorus in *Œdipus at Colonus*,

‘that is the final lot of man, even old age, hateful, impotent, unsociable, friendless, wherein all evil of evil dwells.’

The autumn of a nation is also its golden age, when all things come to fruition under a golden harvest moon. The one transcendent gift of the East to the world is the apple of Eden that has ripened to the fall. This mellow fruit of long experience and slow maturity is offered to a man and a woman who have never been Within, whose race-memory is but remotely connected with Paradise. It is the challenge of a serener age of Being to the turbid and aimless powers of Doing—‘What are you doing? Where are you going?’ And those who have accepted the challenge and eaten of the apple will see the world through different eyes. All that is most intelligent and sensitive in modern criticism is beginning to apprehend and take note of a subtle change in our attitude towards the East, especially towards Chinese art and poetry. W. L. Schwartz, writing on the appeal of the Far East in the poetry of the United States, quotes Professor J. Washington Hall :

‘Because our poets have already developed a natural attitude towards life and death, because they have already sensed the relativity of good and evil and abandoned the dogma of natural depravity,



and discovered that poetry is a normal muscular relaxation of the soul, not a hysteria nor a studied gesture . . . they garner such delight and instruction from the Pacific-Asian masters.'

An English critic, Ronald Fraser, in *The Observer*, notes the same influence but from a rather different angle :

'The pleasure in Chinese art and poetry seems difficult to acquire, but it comes like religion. All those travellers, scholars and writers who discover the spirit of China to us are responsible for important changes, because in those who have once felt the pleasure there takes place a permanent alteration.'

The whole tragedy of the West lies in the fact that it has been deprived of its season of ripeness, the quiet beauty of many-coloured change and the brooding hush, essential close time for reflection, that precedes the storm. The shrines of its patron saints, St Martin and St Luke, were levelled by shell-fire in the Great War. Its parks and pleasaunces, sacred to freedom and ordered growth, are this and this desirable building estate for sale ; its orchards of wisdom and maturity are cut down and the bare spaces covered with bungaloid growth. What is true of the human spirit is equally true of its natural environment.

'The economic and social changes of the last century,' says Christopher Dawson, 'have produced a revolution in the relations of man to nature and in the vital structure of society itself. They have destroyed the biological equilibrium between human society and its natural environment. Hitherto in every European society the higher urban civilization has been a comparatively light

superstructure which rested on the broad and solid foundation of rural society.

‘To-day all this is changed. In highly industrialized societies like Great Britain, the country folk form a small minority in a predominantly urban population, and are themselves rapidly becoming urbanized in their standards of culture and their views of life. Even in the countries where agriculture retains its economic importance, the peasant no longer preserves his separate way of life, and all the powers of the state and of public opinion, acting through politics and the press, standardized education and universal military service, co-operate to produce a population of completely uniform habits and education. Modern urban civilization no longer has any contact with the soil or the instinctive life of Nature. The whole population lives in a high state of nervous tension. . . . Everywhere the conditions of life are becoming more and more artificial and make an increasing demand on men’s nervous energies. The rhythm of social life is accelerated, since it is no longer forced to keep time with the life of Nature.’

In a narrowing world the sense of space and all it implies, the limitations of man and the vastness of creation, is lost. The average man, herding with his fellows in a jungle of factory and tenement, is powerless to conceive of any other God than man. So he must fashion God in his own image, in the likeness of himself, his class, his nation. In a word, God is Uniformity of type. But Nature is never uniform, and in a world moulded into type she would still be the eternal rebel. Her nearest approach to uniformity is made in winter when all boughs are bare and the frozen furrows are linked together. But even this is only apparent and on

the surface, underneath is preparation and the stir of forces against which the iron rule of winter is powerless to prevail. Science is partly responsible for the revulsion of the West against Nature ; not the science of to-day or to-morrow but that of yesterday, since most of us think a day behind. But 'Nature red in tooth and claw' and 'the indestructibility of matter,' the clarion calls of the 19th century, have dwindled into the croaking of a few hoary ravens of Rationalism. 'Unity in variety' is the watchword of the future. And instead of a pandemonium of mutually destructive forces we are beginning slowly to discover Intelligence working through variety towards an endless series of harmonies whose key is the moral law. No writer of to-day has more clearly pointed out this new aspect of science towards Nature than Mr Hugh Fausset in *The Proving of Psyche* :

'For as science penetrates deeper into natural phenomena, it discovers more and more evidence of a creative purpose and of "a whole" which, in General Smuts' words, "is not a mere mechanical system" that consists indeed of parts but is more than the sum of its parts, which a purely mechanical spirit necessarily is ; that has "something internal, some inwardness of structure and function, some specific inner relations, some internality of character or nature, which constitutes that *more*.

'This discovery of spontaneity and of a power of creative assimilation in, for example, the constellation of electrical units in the atom, or of a still deeper and subtler order in the inner co-operative creative harmony of the cell, is no less than a discovery of the spiritual in phenomena so long held to be governed by mechanical laws, and of a

spirit which, if partial and inchoate at the bottom of Nature's scale, is yet kindred in its harmonizing of free impulse and of law to the spirit which in human personality may become, to a large extent, dominant and all-pervasive.'

But the 'discovery of spontaneity and of a power of creative assimilation' is less of a discovery than of a confirmation of doctrines that had permeated the East centuries before Christ. It is enshrined above all in the Tao Teh King of Lao Tzŭ, whose date is approximately 600 B.C. Tao is a name of mystery, as I shall have occasion to show in later passages of this book. Lao Tzŭ himself confesses that 'The Tao which can be expressed in words is not the eternal Tao, the name which can be uttered is not its eternal name.' But he also goes on to say, 'As soon as Tao creates order, it becomes nameable. When it once has a name, men will know how to rest in it.'

Thus the task of naming the unnamed belongs to a generation far distant from the time of Lao Tzŭ and perhaps from our present day. For modern civilization does not create order. Rather it is experimenting year by year in the machinery by which order may be created. But order cannot be created by machinery alone. If this were so, then Bolshevism would indeed prevail with its vision of interminable levels punctuated at intervals by human factories. The ultimate ideal of the Russian thinker is to evoke a new kind of reflex action through the external stimulus of the State, causing the human cog-wheel to revolve of its own accord. Then, and then alone, neither force nor

government without representation will be necessary, for—

‘when Socialism has shortened the working day, raised the masses to a new life, created such conditions for the majority of the population as to enable everybody, *without exception*, to perform the functions of government, then every form of the State will completely wither away.’

Yet not for a moment would we deny the greatness of the aim nor the intense desirability of the objects to be achieved. It is in method and in ultimate ideal that Christ differs from Anti-Christ, the method that culminates in the robot, or the method that confers upon man the freedom of the Universe. The counsel of despair and the gospel of hope have aims and objects in common. But the method of the first begins and ends with the material, whereas the second, responding to the spiritual and passing through the material, ends in the unity of both. Esme Wingfield-Stratford has summed up the situation which confronts every man who takes thought and looks ahead of his time :

‘But we have studied history in vain, unless it has taught us to reinforce hope by patience. We must not look for revolutionary change except as the result of a process as gradual and unhurried as that of growth. One fine morning may suffice to burst the bud, but it takes months to develop seed into flower. On the soil, enriched by that red rain, the seeds may have been well and truly planted. We can at least water and prepare the ground, waging sharp war upon all things rank and gross in nature, weeds of cupidity and untruth and all uncharitable-

ness. The question, whose answer spells life or death for civilized man, is being put with ever more menacing insistence—are the human mind and spirit capable of being adapted to the requirements of a Machine Age? With blind precipitancy we have revolutionized our environment; it has yet to be seen whether we can effect a corresponding revolution in ourselves.'

And finally :

'The discovery that spiritual bonds are more potent than those of force or interest, is one of untold possibilities for the healing of nations.'

The discovery of spiritual bonds uniting East and West is our adventure. The voices of the West are beginning to die away. Even the languid drawl of the last B.B.C. broadcaster, informing us how much he distrusts depth and deep thinking and finds on the surface all that is essential to life, trails off into a confused murmur and a babble of books essential to leisure. And as the owner of the voice has sufficiently explained his views on life, we may take it that leisure means recreation in its surface sense. But alas for the gentleman with the light garden rake! he has uncovered the abyss. For the word '*creation*' is the vastest word in the human language, and the little prefix *re* applies to the working of the universal law of which life and death are the great examples. Work and play, toil and rest, routine and freedom, life is not for labour, neither is the goal of life leisure but, so long as the world of matter endures, each is for each. And so long as the distribution is wholly unequal and therefore, from a life point of view, unjust—labour for you and leisure for me—there is but one

immediate goal confronting all men of leisure and goodwill—the achievement of balance in life. In the West the education of the people, gradually transferred from the Church to the Government, is largely, if not predominantly, concerned with life for labour. It is ninety per cent. vocational and careerist, and the rest is made up of ethical snippets from the Bible. The objective of State education is purely utilitarian with a grudging concession to the religious spirit in the shape of a Cambridge-shire Syllabus, a Book of Prayers and Hymns for Use in Schools. China, on the other hand, went to another extreme, and its ancient educational system was based on æstheticism.

‘The complicated examination system in the Chinese governmental machine,’ says Mr J. W. T. Mason, ‘is an æsthetic movement, giving rewards not for utilitarian success in administration but for refinements of mental sensitiveness as self-sufficient in themselves, having no fundamental relationship with practical progressive results.’

Even the system of handwriting, as he points out, is neither retained nor adapted for purposes of utility but for sheer æsthetic enjoyment. Calligraphy has always been an important branch of Chinese pictorial art. But the true meaning and value of education in China may be traced to a pregnant saying of Confucius who, when asked how the superior man attained his position, replied, ‘*He cultivates himself so as to bring rest unto the people.*’ Beyond the world of toil lay the world of leisure, and the great statesman who built canals and irrigated his province, and was also a Court of Appeal against the unjust decision of a subordinate, led the people

in the art of rest and re-creation. The art of leisure cost the people nothing to attain. Theirs were the public gardens of the City, the glories of the landscape unringed by the walls of a privileged class, mountains to which access was free and waterways that bore the adventurous to adventure. And, above all, there were flowers, the symbols of variety and colour and fragrance of life, and the flower fairs where

‘ Leisure and pleasure drift along,  
Beggar and Marquis join the throng,  
And care, humility, rank, and pride  
In the sight of the flowers is laid aside.’

‘ Life for leisure ’ is the motto of the idler and dilettante dreamer, but ‘ leisure for life ’ is the watchword of the future for all. Yet the whole value of a true enjoyment of life—a re-creation that is both physical, mental and spiritual—lies in its spontaneity. Beginning with the physical and culminating with the spiritual, it is first a question of health. You cannot teach it, preach it, nor instil it. All you can do is to remove the obstacles that come between the individual outlook and a world made up of changing form and colour and perspective, of growth, decay and rebirth. The disease of the West is the eye-disease of ophthalmia. The dust and grit of industrial processes have set up inflammation and the growth of a film. And the first specialist to call in is not the professor of poetry nor the art master, but the Medical Officer of Health. Zoroaster, Moses, the writers of the Vedas, the ancient Egyptian poets, the early Chinese ceremonialists were also the first health officers. They saw bodily beauty and enhanced it,



following the law of eurythmics ; they cleaned it from dirt and pollution and bade it stand forth a shining symbol of the spirit that informed it. That was their task, to prepare man for the recognition of himself and his identification of himself with the law :

‘ When the lapse of the third night turns itself to light, then the soul of the pure man goes forward, recollecting itself at the perfume of the plants. A wind blows to meet it from the midday region, a sweet-scented one, more sweet-scented than the other winds.

‘ In that wind there comes to meet him his own law in the figure of a maiden, one beautiful, shining, with shining arms ; one powerful, well-grown, slender, with large breasts, praiseworthy body ; one noble, with brilliant face, one of fifteen years, as fair in her growth as the fairest of creatures.

‘ Then to her speaks the soul of the pure man asking, “ What maiden art thou whom I have seen here as the fairest of maidens in body ? ”

‘ Then replies to him his own law, “ I am, O Youth, thy good thoughts, words, and works, thy good law, thine own law of thine own body—which would be in reference to thee like in greatness, goodness and beauty, sweet-smelling, victorious, harmless, as thou appearest to me.

‘ “ Thou art like me, O well-speaking, well-thinking, well-acting youth, devoted to the good law, so in greatness, goodness and beauty as I appear to thee.” ’

Spontaneity is a natural spring. All human emotions that are coloured with beauty and tinged with awe, all laughter that comes from the heart of a child, a heart that quickens and responds though the arteries harden and a mile is a mile to lagging

feet, the sense of rhythm through which we glide into the dance of life, all these are spontaneous and never-failing. The natural law is the law of flow from well-spring to ocean ; water is the symbol of human life, and a river that keeps its bounds, that is neither silted nor choked with rushes, that does not lose itself in the barren sands of desire, is the symbol of an ordered life. It is the flow of fulfilment between the aim and accomplishment of God, from a tiny personal beginning to a vast and impersonal goal. The call of religion to a single soul is the call of the sea, and the song of the river that has groped its way from darkness to light, that has found itself and broadened on its noonday course, is the answering call of self-surrender. In *The Open Conspiracy*, by H. G. Wells, we hear the song of the river as the most significant soul of our day sweeps onward past the islanded Utopias of youth, the little static worlds left far behind, towards an immortality that no personal survival can attain :

‘ Man’s soul is no longer his own. It is, he discovers, part of a greater being which lived before he was born and will survive him. The idea of a survival of the definite individual with all the accidents and idiosyncracies of his temporal nature upon him, dissolves to nothing in this new view of immortality.’

This, however, is no ‘ new view of immortality ’ glimpsed for the first time by a Western writer. What is new to Mr Wells is as old as the Upanishads :

‘ He who understands both Knowledge and Ignorance passes by Ignorance over death and by Knowledge enjoys deathlessness.

‘Into blind darkness pass they who worship change-into-naught ; into still greater dark they who worship change-into-aught.

‘It is neither what comes by change-into-aught, they say, nor what comes by change-into-naught ; thus have we heard from the sages who taught us this lore.

‘He who understands both change-into-aught and Destruction passes by Destruction over death and by change-into-aught enjoys deathlessness.

‘The breath to the everlasting wind ; and be this body ended in ashes.’

The danger of the great religions which had their origin in India is that they led away from life to other-worldliness, renunciation and moral cowardice. The danger of modern civilization is the danger of everydaism, of world-acceptance—not of the world that is, but the world that appears to be. To make Routine our God, to worship Him with our clothes, our habits, to bring before His shrine the offering of our business hours, our conventional Sabbaths, our social pursuits, our pet indulgences—this is the religion of Civilization. Countless are the generations of the East that have passed from illusion to reality, countless the everyday men of the West who have ignored reality and accepted illusion. But Science is already breaking in upon their daydreams. They no longer walk with the careless security of their fathers. This good solid earth is beginning to dissolve before them ; the very rocks are atoms moving eternally in space ; there is neither Heaven above nor Hell below. And still they cling desperately to the old systems that hang in rags about them, the mental

wear of the dead Victorians. Only they walk faster and talk louder and seek refuge in speed and sound from the self from whose narrowing limits they would escape and the non-self whose eternity appals them.

In literature, art and music the opposite effect is seen. The creative artist does not attempt to escape from self. He is supremely self-conscious. The newspaper press is the pedestal from which he accepts the adoration of his friends, to whom in turn he must offer homage. The cult of pedestalism has become a temporary shelter from the draughts of doom and the bleak levels of oblivion. There are plenty of competent, smug craftsmen or lusty blacksmiths hammering at their vocal trade, but few great artists. And the reason for this is to be found in the refusal to face reality, in the confounding of reality with realism, in the isolation of the particular, the individual from the whole, man from nature, matter from spirit. The artist is for ever seeking to save his soul alive. He fears above all things the merging of himself with others. Unwilling to identify himself with man or with Nature, he looks upon the one as 'copy' and upon the other as 'local colour' and a background for himself. Yet there is no escape from self save by way of Self, no immortality in creative art for the creator except through Creation. He must dissolve to abide, pass with the wind, fall with the rain and mingle with the night. He must shed himself, cast off the raiment of personality, become the man he hates, the woman he loves, a child, a hero, an outcast, a fool.

This is the beginning of adventure ~~to become the~~

world we live in, the very spirit of our time, to expand not by conquest of others, but by conquest of the crowd within ourselves, to take like water the lower level and so draw all streams and tributaries to ourselves. For this is the beginning of the Wisdom of the East—by self-expansion to make room within ourself, by humility, by seeking the lower level, to renew from other sources and let the lives of others commingle with our own. Renewed and replenished, renewing and replenishing, we pass from the world of Becoming into the Universe of Being, where—

‘There is nothing that I am not, and nothing that is not I.’

Already there is a feeling of land across the waters, the sound of breakers ahead. A flutter passes through our sails and strange scents of unknown flowers are drifting towards us. Now is the time, before we land, to remember that meaning of the quest. What spoil of ancient cities and vanished dynasties shall be ours? What gods and shrines as yet unplundered, what pictures and porcelain shall load the returning keel? For the dreams and philosophies and arts of a silent world are lying before us within the open threshold of the storehouse of Time. Surely they are ours to choose from and gather and collect what we will? Alas! the dreams of the poets are dust swept into the haze of ancient sunsets, the philosophies are but disjointed bones scattered in the desert of Gobi, or hidden by Himalayan snows; the arts have perished with the inspiration that gave them birth, as the breath of life no longer renewed them and

vitality became a dying force imprisoned and encrusted by convention. When the homeward voyage is ended we shall have nothing to declare—nothing that would enrich the revenue by one dollar.

To an acquisitive generation we may bring no gift, to a curious Athenian market-place no new thing, not so much as would suffice to make a newspaper paragraph. Yet if we return empty-handed it is because we have learnt a lesson, taught by a wise man from Persia long ago, that pearls are of little use to those who die of thirst in the desert. So visions shall be our only cargo, for we who travel through the jungle of civilization, and the nightmare of faith in dissolution, have need of vision beyond all other gifts. As water is to those who thirst, so sight is to those who have gone astray, who cannot see the wood for the leaves nor the dawn of revelation glimmering on the Eastern verge. You and I have left the Night of Armageddon behind us, where nationalism is contending with internationalism, class with class, matter with spirit, the maddest dualism of all. False internationalism, false dawn ! That glow in the Western sky behind us is thrown by fires of destruction lit by the levelling Mongol. Dawn lies ahead. This quest is but an episode of the endless quest. But it closes with the traveller's return and the gift of three visions for those who have eyes to see :

To a crowded environment the vision of Space.

To the rigid and water-tight compartments of social life the vision of Fluidity.

To the everyday routine of a material world the adventuring Spirit of God.

## CHAPTER III

### THE THREE VINEGAR TASTERS

A MAY morning of the 12th century A.D. The scene opens on a green cauldron enclosed by towering hills and soaring forests of oak and maple, chestnut and hawthorn, with here and there the glow of pink azalea or yellow clematis. Under the summits of a thousand rose-lit crags, gnarled and distorted pines are clinging. There is a sound of water, the faint thud and plunge of a hidden torrent far beneath us. The grass at our feet is patterned with rare primulas and lilies of the valley. In the middle of the plateau three luminous figures are standing before a tall jar of pale-blue opalescent glaze. The centre figure is darker than his companions. His head is partly shaven and a halo surrounds it. He appears to be looking beyond, wrapped in a profound reverie ; but there is a hint of sorrow and pity in his half-closed eyes. On his left is a venerable sage whose white hair blows over his shoulders. His face is composed and almost expressionless like a mask, yet benevolence is written in every wrinkled line. The third is the most venerable of them all. His long beard, like threads of silk, reaches to his waist ; his hair is done up into a knot on the top of his head. But his eyes challenge your attention ; they have light and joy and vision that takes in all things at a glance.

As each in turn dips his finger into the jar and

tastes the brew, you note—the wry face of the first, the calm indifference of the second, and the delight and rapture of the third. For these are the three vinegar tasters of Chinese legend, and the brew they are tasting is the brew of life. Buddha has tasted and found it bitter, Confucius has found it sour, and Lao Tzŭ has pronounced it sweet. And this place of their assembly, this green cauldron beneath the granite hills, is neither to be found in India, China nor Japan, but in Corea, the Land of Morning Calm. It is called Chang-an Sa and lies a little below the Diamond Mountains and the world-unrivalled view of The Twelve Thousand Peaks. It is here, if anywhere, that poetry and religion meet, beauty and truth blending in a hush of inspiration and attainment.

But these are the three great leaders of Eastern thought, and each of them has differed profoundly from the others. And who shall say, where the Masters of Life differ, whether the brew is bitter or sour or sweet? There are moments that come to all of us when, either singly or with others, with those we love, or those with whom we are associated in a thousand affairs, we realize that the brew of life is before us and are minded to taste it. Yet the brew of to-day is never quite the same as that of yesterday. We taste it in sunshine or in gloom, in sorrow or joy, in hours of travail and slow accomplishment, in the world of action and material aims, and in moments of illumination world-apart, but the taste is different. All we can say is that to-day's brew is sweeter than yesterday's or bitterer than that of the day before.

Generally speaking, we are optimists or pessi-



mists or indifferentists more or less from our bodily state and health, from our environment or the teaching of tradition, seldom from inward conviction. Moreover, the brew of life must contain all the ingredients of life, the bitterness, the sourness and sweetness intermingled. And when the last ingredient of all, that of memory, has been added, what is the predominant taste? Why did Buddha find it bitter, Confucius sour, and Lao Tzŭ sweet? To begin with Buddha we must begin with Hinduism. For Buddha was essentially the child of his age and tradition. The great names of Indian sages are written on one scroll. The genealogical tree arises from spiritual father to son, from the Rishis of the Vedas through the seers of the Upanishads to Buddha. And those names that stand out in illuminated capitals are those of reformers and renewers of ancient inspiration, since there is only one tree of faith on Indian soil, with many branches and but one stem. Speaking of Western misconceptions, Edmond Holmes says :

‘In the West the idea is still prevalent that Buddha broke away completely from the spiritual idealism of the Upanishads, that he denied God, denied the soul, and held out to his followers the prospect of annihilation as the final reward of a righteous life. This singular misconception . . . is due to Buddha’s agnostic silence having been mistaken for comprehensive denial. . . . It is only by affiliating the ethics of Buddhism to the metaphysics of the Upanishads that we can pass behind the silence of Buddha and get into touch with the philosophical ideas which rule his mind, ideas which were not the less real or effective because he deliberately held them in reserve.’

Buddha is in lineal descent from Kapila who lived probably about two centuries before him. It is not our purpose here to go into the differences, often profound, between the teachings of the two masters. Buddhism has survived the doctrine of Sankhya ascribed to Kapila for this reason—that while the elder sage evolved a system of philosophy founded on the Upanishads, Buddha, starting from the same source, preached the Way of Everyman, the middle path between two extremes—the way of the sensualist and the way of the ascetic. Kapila, for all his influence on the world in which Buddha was born, fired no popular imagination. He had nothing to give the people. His system touched the intellect, never the heart. Buddha was moved by pity and human consideration at the sight of sorrow and suffering. He had the curiosity and unrest which comes to youth and impels it to wander even out of Paradise. Four of the grim realities of life met him on the road: an old man bowed by the burden of years, a sick man covered with sores, a putrefying corpse, and an aged mendicant monk. From that time the scales dropped from his eyes and he saw no longer beauty but the illusion of beauty. The flower unfolded but to fall, the fruit ripened to decay, the three seasons of birth, growth and maturity were gathered one by one.

Winter, being the last season of all, must prevail. And although, following the Hindu doctrine of rebirth, man returns to the world of his former actions and desires, the round of life is ever the same. Youth, adventuring from its Paradise of ignorance and illusion, encounters decrepitude, sickness, beggary and dissolution, and in each

object is revealed himself. So Buddha tasted the brew of life and found it bitter.

From the vast ocean of Buddhist literature it is only possible to give a few illustrations taken from a single book. Since the Council of Asoka in 240 B.C., the Dhammapada, says Kenneth Saunders, has been accepted

‘ as a collection of the sayings of Gautama. . . . It breathes the very spirit of the Teacher, and it has always been used in Buddhist lands as a handbook of “devotion” or meditation, in whose solemn precepts men hear the voice of Sakyamuni summoning them to the life of contemplation, of strenuous mind-culture. The world, it tells them, is without permanence or purpose other than that of expiation; the body is “a nest of disease” and the seat of “desire” ; the mind itself is subject to decay, and capricious, easily led away after false pursuits. Yet here, in the mind of man, lies his hope of salvation : he may make it a strong tower of defence. Though the world is out of gear, yet, like the Stoic, he may build within himself a Kingdom and be at peace.’

Beauty and truth are eternally divorced in Buddhism, for beauty is but the symbol of decay, impermanence, impurity, illusion. So from the Dhammapada we may take this thought on life :

‘ What is life but the flower or the fruit which falls when ripe, yet ever fears the untimely frost ? Once born, there is naught but sorrow ; for who is there can escape death ? From the first moment of life, the result of passionate love and desire, there is naught but the bodily form transitional as the lightning flash.’

This on the human form :

‘ Look at this painted image, wounded and swollen, sickly and full of lust, in which there is no permanence. This wasted form is a nest of disease and very frail : it is full of putrid matter and perishes. Death is the end of life. What delight is there for him who sees these grey bones scattered like gourds in autumn ?

‘ Here is a citadel of bones plastered with flesh and blood, and manned by old age and death, self-will and enmity.’

This outlook of the enlightened one on the world :

‘ Knowing that the world is like a hillock of sand, that it is unsubstantial as a mirage, he separates the flowery arrows of Mara (Death), and escapes from the necessity of birth and death.’

The middle path between asceticism and sensuality has already moved away from the middle and is wandering in the barren regions of world-denial. Already the sun is high in the heavens, but the three vinegar tasters have long departed, vanished with the morning mists. Only the tall jar that holds the brew of life remains. In the full glare of sunlight all things challenge us, from the steel-blue of the distant mountains that seem so near, to the radiant gleam of the porcelain jar that here and now is the very centre of our Universe. It is noon. Confucianism and noontide arrive together. There are no lingering mysteries of light and shadow in the philosophy compounded of social ethics and politics by Confucius.

‘ His whole system,’ says Dr Lionel Giles, the greatest of his Western commentators, ‘ is based on

nothing more or less than the knowledge of human nature. The instincts of man are social and therefore fundamentally good, while egoism is at bottom an artificial product and evil. Hence the insistence on altruism which we find in the Sayings of Confucius, the injunction to "act socially," to live for others in living for oneself.'

In China the family is the norm of the State and the Emperor is the father of his people. Adjustment through behaviour is the key-note of Confucianism. Where space is limited and members of the family dwell together under one roof the amenities of life can only be procured by careful adjustment. And since the whole conduct of affairs is based on parentalism and filial piety, the importance attached to ceremonial and etiquette is hardly to be wondered at. Confucius himself lamented over the vanished records of the past relating to the ceremonial of two ancient dynasties. But in his time, about 500 B.C., at least two classical records of Li or Ceremonial were in existence, viz. the I-li and the Chou-li, while the Li-chi, compiled in the 2nd century B.C., is largely based on the traditional sayings of Confucius and his disciples. All ceremonial may be divided into two kinds—secular and religious. The latter are rites connected with worship and divination. Reverence, courtesy and politeness are the outcome of this intense attachment to observances. Confucius was no innovator. He spoke with the voice and authority of the Past, he clarified all things but added nothing except the supreme example of his own tireless, persevering, reverential and humane individuality. Many writers have dwelt on his

characteristic sayings, revealing his qualities and touching, with the respect due to the illustrious dead, lightly on his imperfections. Sum him up if you will, analyse him, compare him, to his detriment, with Jesus of Galilee, with Buddha, or even his older contemporary Lao Tzŭ, and the answer will come back to you in a single word—‘China.’

Rome, Egypt, Babylon, Assyria, Greece, her contemporaries—where are they now? Gone down in the night of disruption and chaos. East and West, the world is green with their graves, graves of cities foundered in the jungle, empires that have sunk to grass-grown tumuli. But China went to school in statecraft and government, and applying the lesson learnt in the most ancient and most natural of human institutions, that of the family, built on sure foundations. Confucius, driven from Court amid the corruption and decay of a feudal age, wrote down the lesson of the past for the guidance of the future. Other dynasties arose adding province to province, kingdom to kingdom, until, from the Ch’in dynasty 221 B.C. to the Ch’ing dynasty A.D. 1627–1908, with brief intervals of warring kingdoms, all China was united in one Empire. Yet behind her rulers, whether they called themselves Confucianists, Taoists, or Buddhists, whether enlightened, despotic or abject slaves of the inner court, looms the figure of the Sage of Lu, the little state whose sole claim to remembrance is through him.

An Empire governed by a philosopher for two thousand years seems fantastic to the Western mind, but only because no people in Europe or America

can be called a philosophic people. Religion, the religion of Christianity, has supplied the motive power, whereas the influence of philosophy, that of the Greeks, has been indirect, through learning and literature. Even the fourth Gospel, saturated with the mystical philosophy of Alexandria, has never appealed to Western democracies as the simpler narratives of the first three. For generations the supernatural has prevailed against the rational, and the wings of creative imagination have been clipped by the papal shears of Rome. But Confucius, more completely than any of the Chinese masters, represented the philosophical spirit of his countrymen. From the beginning of time, China has had but one religion—that of Tao. The first authentic reference to it occurs in the book of Kwan-tzū, written in the 7th century B.C. Literally, Tao means the Path. Professor Morgan de Groot calls it 'the Order of the World, Nature, or Natural Order.' But Tao existed also before the Universe came into being, as the Creative Cause, 'the Mother of all things.'

When the world began, universal Tao divided into two parts, the Tao of Heaven and the Tao of Earth. The Chinese themselves described all human religion, as they knew it, as *Jen Tao* or the Tao of Man. Man himself, according to the ancient classic *Li Chi*, 'is a product of the beneficial operation of Heaven and Earth, or of the union of the Female and Male principle.' Confucius, like Lao Tzū his great opponent, followed the ancient Tao of China. He was no externalist, a mere master of ceremonial and purveyor of platitudes, any more than Lao Tzū was an idle dreamer

sitting down to look out of the window and do nothing in order that everything might be accomplished. Wherein, then, does the Taoism of the one differ from the Taoism of the other? The Tao of Confucius is based on the 'observance of the laws of social life which are called *li*, that is, all the good rules of human conduct, rescripts and customs of family life, society and government, besides rites and religion—in short, about the whole Tao of Man.' And all the rules of life, according to Confucius, are to be found in the five books or *King* which he edited for the guidance of the Chinese race.

So to go forward we must go back and learn from the past the lessons that apply to the future. Even in the past we are limited within the narrow compass of five books. We are to become students of a particular epoch and readers of a particular anthology, reduced by Confucius to three hundred poems whose retention was due to their didactic spirit in setting forth examples of virtuous conduct. In the doctrine of Confucius there is no allowance for the expansion of the spirit of man. What applied to one generation applies equally to another. The laws that govern human nature are immutable. Hence learning within limits is the essential and a literary class of scholars the outcome. The Master sees his son hurrying through the Court and stops him with the question—

'Have you read the Odes?'

'Not yet,' replied Le.

'Then,' said Confucius, 'if you do not learn the Odes you will not be fit to converse with.'



If this were all, if the teaching of the supreme genius who made and moulded China for two thousand years were confined within the narrow walls of the classroom and the dogma of immutability, we might well leave Confucius alone. But there is a spirit at work within the *li* or rules of social conduct which we cannot afford to ignore. At the centre of the *li* lies the *Hiao*, which English translators have rendered over and over again as 'filial piety.' To the average Western mind Confucianism is inseparably connected with a rigid rule of conduct, just as Buddhism is connected with *Nirvana*. Both have been profoundly misunderstood. 'Filial piety' no more renders the idea of *Hiao* than 'Annihilation' does that of *Nirvana*. *Hiao* is no mere term for ethical conduct; it is the profoundly religious aspiration of the race.

'The Chinaman,' says John Hubbard, 'through the long chain of those, his own proximate creators, who have gone before him, worships the ultimate Creator. And if the chain thus extends backwards, so also must it reach forwards. The chain of worship must not be broken; it must never come to an end. Only when he himself has assumed the character of a creator is the Chinaman qualified to worship; only by fatherhood . . . is he justified in appearing before his ancestors and his Creator. . . . The chain of creation is one with the chain of worship, and to break the one is to break the other. . . . In the mind of a Chinaman, *Hiao* not only implies a sense of devotion to his creators and their Creator, but also the piety that provides the generations to come, lest the chain of worship should be broken.'

But, as Hubbard points out, such a religion serves no purpose of the individual, who is simply used as a means to an end. Neither does it consider the interests of Society. 'It inculcates no obedience to the Government, and is no polity of the State, for the State can barely exist in its presence. *Hiao* has no social influence.'

But 'to him who follows Tao, the Path of Creation, racial affairs are lifted into the clear region of duty—he is brought into contact with the infinite, he serves in self-sacrifice, and his life acquires cosmocentric significance.' Dimly we begin to realize that we have come into the presence of something utterly strange, something that has no counterpart in our world of ideals. Individualism we know, Socialism is clamouring at our gates, but we shall look in vain through our dictionaries for 'Racialism.' Yet this and no other is the Chinese ideal. It challenges comparison with all our slogans of the past and present, with the dying liberalism of *laissez-faire*, and the insurgence of the greatest good of the greatest number, where the rights of minorities are shattered and intelligence, except so far as it is applied for the uses of the State, succumbs. Here is no glorification of labour for the sake of the individual or of the mass, but labour continuous and unceasing for the unknown, the generations to come. Its sole affinity with anything we can understand is with Communism. But it is a Communism which has nothing in common with the dogmas of Karl Marx and his Russian successors. It is the ancient Communism of the East, through the family and clan, that obtains in India to the present day in spite of the

efforts of the English legal mind to break it down in favour of the inheritance of the private individual. But whereas in England the individual inherits property with a minimum of responsibility, even as tenant for life without impeachment for waste, in India the head of the clan, or family, is a responsible administrator whose ultimate object is the preservation of its members as a religious unit. But the profound difference between Hindu India and Confucian China is to be found in the worship. To the Hindu, God is everywhere and may be approached through any of His names and attributes, whether as Shiva, Vishnu or Sri Krishna. He is to be sought and found through the beauty of His own works from Himalaya to Ganges, through His revelation of the dawn and His mysteries of the twilight.

‘Oh, Mother Earth, Father Sky,  
Brother Wind, Friend Light,  
Sweetheart Water,  
Here take my last salutation with folded hands !  
For to-day I am melting away into the Supreme,  
Because my heart became pure,  
And all delusion vanished,  
Through the power of your good company.’

The Confucian keeps good company, too, but it is the company of his human forebears. In prayer he touches lightly the endless chain of ancestors, and the thrill of his worship returns to him from afar. He is conscious of the sacred, inviolable trust, of his own consecration as the living link between the past and the future, and beyond all offering and oblations he has rendered the sacrifice of himself at the altar of continuity and so obtained his place

in the line of the immortals. Confucius was no materialist, then. Because he did not pretend to explain what lay beyond life he was none the less acutely aware. It was in this spirit of awareness that he made sacrifice to the dead as though he felt their presences around him. For him wisdom was 'to cultivate earnestly our duty towards our neighbour, and to reverence spiritual beings while maintaining always a due reserve.' It is a wisdom that never quite attains maturity; one that stirs no pulse to beat faster, that fires no beacon on the hill-top. In his search for the Kingdom of Heaven on earth Confucius returns to the Golden Age that is gone.

For him the past is the exemplar and model of the future. To go forward we must go back. There are no great inherent forces in the present that will carry us on into a greater future than the race has known. The whole Tao of Man is to be learned by study of the ancients. No wonder Confucius found the brew of life sour. For it is compounded, as far as he knows it, of fruits that have never been allowed to ripen in due season, for whom summer is a neglected Danaë unvisited by any shower of gold. The sacred spring of China, prolonged by the grace of Heaven into the 12th century B.C., has departed with good King Wu. But still it lingers, a ghostly mist arising from the mounds of vanished dynasties, obscuring the sun of progress and the mellowing moon, drawing no sap from the parent stem into the stagnant bough, no tumult of sweetness around the hardened core. By the grace of Heaven this fruit of wisdom is allowed to appear once and for ever in the season of

flower and bud, and by the grace of Confucius it remains immutable, subject to no law of change.

Already the steel-blue hills have lost their hardness, and the clear certainties of noontide are giving way to a twilight tinged with apprehensions and passionate regrets. Gold and red are her colours, dreams and desires, and with every moment intensified, more adorable and elusive than the last, there comes to us a sense of 'the A-hness of things' which may not be translated by any words, but only felt in silence. It is the man-sense of beauty and impermanence which he shares with no other living creature, except perhaps the nightingale; that challenges him to creation before the night of chaos overwhelms him. It is the genesis of song; of art inspired through every medium; the consummation of the passing with the eternal that gives birth to the frail half-deity of human genius. The work survives, the workman seems less to the world than the lowest stone of the temple he builded. On the altar is a shrine with a name engraved thereon. The shrine is empty and the name is only a name. And there is no magic in a name. The magic is within ourselves to rebuild and recreate as best we may, to retrace the record of moments imperishable because someone saw and willed them so. Beauty recorded, even in a single line, is enshrined in the cathedral of man's endeavour and inspiration, but the power and insight that drew one sunset trailing down to linger on canvas has returned to the source. Then, if the work remains immortal, wherein lies the immortality of the workman? There is but one answer—it lies in us, in our power of recall. For it is within our magic,

using the 'Will of God' that works through us, and making room within ourselves to draw from the sea of Being the spirits of the past.

The interpretations of others are only a means to an end. A true interpretation of Shakespeare can only come from Shakespeare himself; we must make way for him. 'He being dead yet speaketh'—what does this mean? Simply that a page of *Hamlet*, a sentence from *Antony and Cleopatra* is lifeless without him. And without this power of making room within ourselves we may understand neither the living nor the dead. For all men and works, whether of men or God, come into our understanding through this capacity of making room. It is a capacity for expansion and containing. Expansion through growth, containing through space. The microcosm of man approaches the macrocosm of God through fullness of life and experience, through knowledge acquired and works accomplished. But it also approaches Him through emptiness, through its power to cast out whatever is useless or redundant, through the space that it makes within itself for the incoming of the tidal waters of life. Thought, which is life's ultimate expression, through which I am and without which I am not, is both fluid and tidal. It neither runs nor walks nor takes wings to fly, but flows and ebbs and ebbs and flows. It flows outward from us into the world of life and is expressed in waves of rhythm, in tumult of discord, in billows of passion, in ripples of laughter, and, at rare moments, in wordless depths of feeling. And life surging without and around us gives back in full measure according to our capacity to make

room and receive. Tao is the flow and ebb of the life-principle in alternation :

‘ It is the spirit of Cosmic Change—the eternal growth which returns upon itself to produce new forms. It recoils upon itself like the dragon, the beloved symbol of the Taoists. It folds and unfolds as do the clouds.’

This is the Taoism of Lao Tzū. It differs profoundly from the Taoism of Confucius which may be called the Taoism of the Race, whereas the Taoism of Lao Tzū is that of the life-principle acting through the individual soul to the Universal and reacting through the Universal to the individual. A little book of some five thousand words, the *Tao Te Ching*, is all that remains to us, from a master-hand.

Yet within this small compass lies a vast realm of thought whose latent possibilities are only beginning to be explored. For, as Dr Lionel Giles has pointed out, ‘ it is easy to see that the *Tao Te Ching* is something more than a mere jumble of stray aphorisms—that it is, in fact, the well-defined though rudimentary outline of a great system of transcendental and ethical philosophy.’ The doctrine of Harmony lies at the core of all Lao Tzū’s teaching and that of his great disciple Chuang Tzū. God is the supreme artist, working through man and nature in form, in colour and in music. The purpose of the Universe is primarily an æsthetic purpose—through Beauty’s infinite variety to the ultimate unity which is Truth. So Chuang Tzū says : ‘ The true Sage, taking his stand upon the beauty of the Universe, pierces the principles of created things.’

Every translator of the *Tao Te Ching* seems to have a different interpretation of the word *Tao*. It has been variously translated as 'Reason,' 'the Path,' 'the Way,' 'Nature,' 'Law,' 'the Absolute.' None of these terms, however, seems to express it entirely. Throughout the Taoist classics of Lao Tzŭ and his school, *Tao* is in motion of flow and ebb. There is a *Tao* of Heaven, *T'ien Tao*; a *Tao* of Earth, *T'i Tao*; and a *Tao* of Man, *Jen Tao*. Yet between all three there is a correspondence and a harmony. True action is action between the three great principles of Heaven and Earth and Man, and it is always spontaneous.

Thus the man of *Tao* acts and responds naturally, inevitably and without deliberation to the *Tao* of Earth and Heaven. Through *Tao* he works and in *Tao* he rests. And the supreme goal of human life is rest in *Tao*. It is the Sabbath of the soul uniting with the Contemplative Spirit. Outwardly man works through knowledge, reason and intelligence, inwardly he attains through intuition. But this intuitive life, which is the very centre of his being, must never be allowed to appear on the surface of everyday existence, neither must the method of reason be allowed to intrude within. Reason is the guardian at the temple of religion. It challenges us before we enter, 'let no man bring to the shrine that which is contrary to reason.' For a true religion is never contrary to reason, never opposed to knowledge. Neither rational nor irrational, it simply transcends and passes beyond the boundary of limitation and definition. The soul, which is the essential mystic within us, must travel through the world of form and time, using the knowledge



acquired by the generations, developing the intellect, directing the will, controlling the desires, working from the personal to the impersonal, from the little love, which begins with sex, to the greater that ends in God, finding to lose, losing the illusive to find the real, possessing all things through the supreme sacrifice of self.

The circle of human knowledge slowly widens, but everywhere we may reach out and, touching the circumference, pass on beyond the sphere where intelligence is King and power of reason his Minister. As the Paradise of Adam was bounded by four rivers, so the world of his eternal travail is surrounded by a sea of Mysticism. No other word better expresses that which lies without the island of man's intellectual supremacy. For, as Havelock Ellis, the most Taoist of Western philosophers, has written : 'Mysticism . . . is the correct term for the relationship of the Self to the Not-Self, of the individual to a whole, when, going beyond his own personal ends, he discovers his adjustment to larger ends, in harmony or devotion or love.' Unity with the One may only be achieved by passing through the variety of the many. Through man to God, through life in its infinite aspects to the Source of life is the Way of Tao. It is at once a Way of approach and a Way of rejection : 'Among men, reject none ; among things, reject nothing. This is called comprehensive intelligence.'

It is not men that the Taoist rejects, but the ways of men. With all ways of all men to choose from, he rejects a thousand to follow one—the Way of Tao, the narrow way that broadens out into the

Infinite. As a creative artist he works on life. As with Christ, so with Lao Tzŭ life-acceptance and not life-avoidance is the very heart of his doctrine. 'The bad man is the material upon which the good man works.' Yet he is no potter of alien clay, moulding men into his own image from motives of vanity and ambition. His method is not that of Muhammed, or Moses, or the boastful Iron Messiah of Moscow. Recognizing the unity of all creation, he moulds himself in the image of that unity. And in moulding himself he is helping others to mould themselves: 'As unwrought material is divided up and made into serviceable vessels, so the Sage turns his simplicity to account, and thereby becomes the ruler of rulers.'

The secret of his success is a love that is selfless, that does not seek to enter from without but draws from within, that profanes no other shrine, tramples on no man's garden but gives access to all who follow the quest for truth and beauty. The most perfect relation in the East of Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, and Muhammedanism in its highest form, is that between Master and Disciple, Teacher and Pupil: 'If the one does not value his teacher, if the other does not love his material, then despite their sagacity they must go far astray.'

And Lao Tzŭ adds these significant words: '*This is a mystery of great import.*'

It is perhaps of greater import than we of the West have ever dreamed. As the outlook on life tends more and more towards the vocational aspect, so the training for life must correspond. It is useless to say that certain hours in the week are set aside for the teaching of traditional religion by means

of a syllabus. You cannot feed the soul with a syllabus, however carefully planned, as the Cambridge Syllabus in England undoubtedly is. The key to religious instruction lies in the character of the teacher and the relation established between himself and the pupil. To recognize the Brotherhood of Life, which must include the lower orders of creation, we must return to the source of life, the Fatherhood of God. The hottentot is not my brother, neither the dog nor the flower is my kindred, save through a mystical apprehension of religion, which, as Havelock Ellis says, 'is the art of finding our emotional relationship to the world conceived as a whole.' A mere brotherhood of man is founded on nothing but a common self-interest. It is a transference of personal rights from the individual to the community and a recognition of human selfishness as a guiding principle. In it the ephemeral desires of one ephemeral generation to another are hallowed and sanctified as the supreme good of Society. It brings the vision of Armageddon nearer to the world than in the troubled times of St John. For at last the issue is joined, and we are beginning to see clearly that the war of the future will be waged, not by the contending Powers of a dying nationalism, but by the forces of self-sacrifice against the forces of self-interest. We are coming to the parting of the ways, and for the moment the choice is with us, but not for long. The Way of the East, which is the way of Christ, of Lao Tzu, of the Japanese Buddhist, and Muhammedan Sufi, is the way of universal Spirit. The Way of the West, which is the way of self, of things as they appear to be, of

Lenin and the Tower of Babel which is building in Moscow, is the Way of materialism, of mechanism without the vital urge of the God whose name is Love.

‘For us,’ says a brilliant Russian author of to-day, ‘love does not exist, we have only sexual relationships.’ If this is so, and the very origin of life to some is found in the temporary union of the casual and promiscuous, what of the ultimate issue? For the inner life, as the East has known from time immemorial, begins with the union of the female and male principle, the Yin and the Yang, and is guarded in the sacred unit of the family. And if the inner life is destroyed at its very source, then the world of human brotherhood is nothing but a hollow shell whose reverberating contacts sound the knell of its racial doom.

Lao Tzŭ’s doctrine of *Wu Wei* has always been the barrier to his appreciation by the West. It has been rendered by translator after translator as ‘inaction,’ ‘doing nothing,’ a doctrine that will never appeal to the Western mind. But Dr Isabella Mears, in her sympathetic interpretation, has revealed the vital thought hidden behind the Chinese characters. Thus *Wu Wei* stands out as the pivot of Lao’s Tzŭ’s teaching and is rendered ‘striving through the power of the Inner Life.’ Once more we see the emergence of two great forces contending for the mastery of the world—the hate that is striving to overthrow from without and the love that is striving to overcome from within.

Noontide, and now the indeterminate hour when the background of these hopes and dreams and

fears is beginning to dissolve in splendour. The steel-blue of the distant hills has given way, they are unarmoured by the touch of twilight, tremulous in a lingering haze of red and gold. Beneath them the oracular voices of the evening arise from deep glooms of billowy fir ; a shiver passes down the forest spine, from oak to maple, chestnut to hawthorn, down to the last line of pink azaleas that straggle between the boulders far below. The roar of a mountain torrent swells and recedes, thunders and falls. Sound and silence, flow and ebb of solemn threnody and muffled dirge, the last flutter of a crimson wing, the amber stillness of afterglow—this day that was ours has gone from us for ever. And yet, in the liberation of death something has returned, something that throbs and pulses in the tone of a lonely temple bell, that gives a soul to incense drifting from flower and fern, a myriad dewy chalices unfolding, a myriad fragrances blending into one. Beauty and evanescence and the imperishable memories of ancient twilights haunting the imperishable race of passing shadows.

And now the glimmer of a tall jar draws us through the coiling mists. Bitter or sour or sweet—what is the brew of life to us ? Almost we know without tasting what the answer will be. Almost ! and still between desire and attainment lies the ultimate, invisible barrier, the final test of motive, and the sifting of that which is temporal from that which is eternal. For two may divide the spoil of nights and days, the jewels of a hundred twilights, and each in his heart may build a shrine for the secrets that two have shared. But only one can taste the brew of life and find it sweet.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE SERVICE OF DREAMS

*Such is the service of dreams. They fire the mind and make the feet of young men restless. The province of wonder has been to rescue men from their heaviness. They settle down in one place, and their children and chattels tie them there, but the nomad in them droops within unchanging horizons. . . .—CLARK P. FIRESTONE, in *The Coasts of Illusion*.*

THERE are three conditions of mind to which the body must conform—work, play and rest. In the preceding chapter we have seen the mind of the East flowing through three different channels. Buddha is planning out the Way of Escape, from illusion to reality ; Confucius is occupied with the Way of Survival through ethics and politics, the temporary generation adjusting itself to the eternal race ; the mind of Lao Tzŭ responds to the Way of Harmony, of adjustment through freedom, the approximation of the infinitely small to the infinitely great, of man to God. Meanwhile the world is pounding on, growing older and greyer with every revolution of the wheel, every fall of the giant hammer. Progress, as we see it, is the response of life to pressure, the to-and-fro of the piston-rod. Work for work's sake ! Life for work and the glorification of the worker, always on the manual side, as though work were nothing but a mechanical

exercise of the muscles ! And yet, 'Work is not the whole of life, nor is it an end in itself.'

Here and there voices are beginning to make themselves heard among the few who care to study the meaning and the values of life. 'Man,' says Ernest Barker, 'is indeed a maker ; but the supreme thing which he makes is himself. If his making were only in the field of external work, his soul would get but a dusty answer to life and its problems.' He goes on to point out that work is a matter of daily and often deadening routine. That it is becoming more and more unskilled, a matter of routine and repetition and less and less of creative energy. And 'the greater the mass of inventions of the human mind, the less the amount of mind required from the great majority of workers for the performance of their particular process.' Speaking of the English—and his words apply no less to the American people—he says, 'In a people of a restless, practical energy, such as ours, the ideals which need to be emphasized are the ideals of leisure ; of creation which is not work but a lovely play ; of serene contemplation.' In America, John Dewey is above all others the social philosopher of his time. He brings the clear light of a penetrating mind to bear on every side of social life. He handles philosophy and humanizes it ; he touches on the various aspects of human progress and illuminates them, and in his *Experience and Nature* all are gathered together and reflect as one. Play and art, according to him, are moral necessities in that,

'They are required to take care of the margin that exists between the total stock of impulses that

demand outlet and the amount expended in regular action. They keep the balance which work cannot indefinitely maintain. They are required to introduce variety, flexibility and sensitiveness into disposition.'

Therefore they are not responsible to any moral code, commandment or special task. Not for them the pulpit, the classroom, the platform. They serve, but in their own way,

'for their spontaneity and liberation from external necessities permits to them an enhancement and vitality of meaning not possible in pre-occupation with immediate needs. Later this meaning is transferred to useful activities and becomes a part of their ordinary working.'

There are three phases of dream haunting the mind of man in its wakeful hours :

*The Creative Dream* which, arising in 'spontaneity and liberation from external necessities,' broadens into vision and harmony, and results in the creative activity known as Art, whose only purpose is to build in beauty the habitation of Truth.

*The Contemplative Dream* which, beginning with love and the lesser unity of man and woman and the family circle, widens out in circles that embrace the widening activities of man to return at last to the Centre of Unity in God. And not through humanity alone but through life in all its manifestations can we approach the Creator of life, when love, which is concerned with the personal and therefore the transient, is transmuted into reverence for Life.

*The Day Dream* which has its origin in idle



speculation and is therefore abortive and unfertile as all forms of idleness. It is the result of using the imagination as an opiate, as a means of escape from a world of contending forces into a world of pleasant images that bear no relation to life as it is. Its symbol is 'that blessed word Mesopotamia' which starts the soul, wrapped in cotton wool, drifting into the stagnant backwaters of delusion.

'Castles in the air,' says John Dewey, 'like art, have their source in a turning of impulse away from useful production. Both are due to the failure in some part of man's constitution to secure fulfilment in ordinary ways. But in one case the conversion of direct energy into imagination is the starting-point of an activity which shapes material, fancy is fed upon a stuff of life which assumes under its influence a rejuvenated, composed and enhanced form. In the other case, fancy remains an end in itself. It becomes an indulging in fantasies which bring about withdrawal from realities, while wishes impotent in action build a world which yields to temporary excitement.'

Utopia belongs to none of these. To most of us it is not a dream but the deliberate attempt of the self-conscious mind to use all things, including art and religion, for utilitarian purposes. Above all, it is the outcome of intellectual vanity and megalomania, the desire of the unit to break the one law of God we are beginning dimly to apprehend—the law of unity in variety. If there is any truth in an idea at once profoundly mystical and practical, then Utopia, which should correspond to the Kingdom of God on earth, can only be built by the goodwill and active co-operation of an

infinite variety of units. No single unit can usurp the function of the whole. The real contributions of the builders of Utopias in the past are to be found in the spirit of their age which they helped to influence and liberate, never in the cities they constructed to hold a future race.

The law of unity in variety is an expanding law. It belongs to no period of time, to no chosen people East or West. No individual may set his seal at the foot of a scroll which is at once the endless charter of freedom and the solemn bond of obligation of the soul of man. All that Dewey has said of art and play applies with equal force to religion. For if the former 'are required to introduce variety . . . into the disposition,' the latter is required to convey the sense of unity. That is why morals come under the purview of religion, since every offence against morality is an offence against community and therefore anti-religious. Yet it is not for the preacher to go beyond his limit in laying bare and rebuking sin, whether it is the sin of the individual or the class or the nation. His duty in the house of God is to expound the law of God, not to amplify or rewrite the codes of man. When the congregation has dispersed, every man must set his own house in order and apply the lesson learnt in community to the routine of life, whether in business, labour, or public affairs. Thus the service of dream, both æsthetic and contemplative, is not directly concerned with the utilitarian purposes of mankind. In art we leave all things to follow beauty ; in religion we leave all things for the sake of truth. Yet art colours and moulds the outward form and in doing so draws us beyond

into the beauty that underlies all masterpieces of man or nature. And if we follow where she leads, we shall find religion established in the heart of beauty and we shall begin to realize that all art has its origin in religion. And religion, which alone enshrines the ultimate secret of happiness and is summed up in the words of St John : ' He who dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him,' abides for us in the realm of Here and Now.

' Not in Utopia—subterraneous fields,—  
Or some secreted island, Heaven knows where !  
But in the very world, which is the world  
Of all of us—the place where in the end  
We find our happiness, or not at all !'

And this is the supreme lesson of all art and philosophy in the Far East—that so long as we are plural and many we shall continue dreaming the Creative Dream and arise to plan and build the many mansions which are varied and innumerable and yet all contained within the House of One. Art in the West comes trumpeting its challenge of variety and individuality, of art for art's sake and the apotheosis of the ego. In China and Japan the reverse has happened from time immemorial. The beginning of Chinese art is in the Creative Dream through which the artist sinks his own individuality and seeks to merge with the subject of his future theme. In *The Flight of the Dragon* Laurence Binyon points out that the first of the Six Canons of Chinese art laid down by Hsieh Ho in the 6th century A.D. is :

' Rhythmic Vitality, or Spiritual Rhythm expressed in the movement of life. . . .

' But " Rhythmic Vitality " . . . though terse

and convenient . . . does not seem quite to cover the full meaning of the original phrase. Mr Okakura renders it, "The Life-movement of the Spirit through the Rhythm of things"; or, again, one might translate it, "The fusion of the rhythm of the spirit with the movement of living things."

'At any rate, what is certainly meant is that the artist must pierce beneath the mere aspect of the world to seize and himself to be possessed by that great cosmic rhythm of the spirit which sets the currents of life in motion.'

Alone among the nations, the Chinese have understood intuitively that the beginning of all art is in the dream of unity. Life foils the artist as it foils the lover, and unity remains a dream. To aim at absorption is to end with reproduction, and it is well that it should be so. Otherwise life would fade into a dream before its purpose were fulfilled, and the artist vanish into the landscape before he achieved a single masterpiece. The story of Wu Tao Tzû's end points a different moral :

'Wu Tao-tzû painted a vast landscape on a palace wall, and the Emperor, coming to view it, was lost in admiration. Wu Tao-tzû clapped his hands. A cave in the picture opened. The painter stepped within his painting and was seen upon earth no more.'

Ultimately the parent vanishes into the children, the artist passes into his work, and both may acquire immortality on earth through the race and the recognition of generations to come. Yet neither has attained more than a qualified unity with the object of desire. Both have seized the universal in the particular, the lover no less than

the artist. For to him all women are summed up in the beloved. There is no one like her, since all the eternal attributes of wifehood and motherhood have gone to her making and for him she is Womanhood incarnate. But in religion alone we attain complete unity by merging with the universal through the particular, through the imperfect vision and the broken dream, through the personal attachment to the last surrender of personality and the recognition of all in One.

These two great forces of love and art have been profoundly misunderstood in the West. We cannot think of either except in terms of personality. Even in the accepted religion that came to us from the East, the very centre of Christ's doctrine that 'God is love' has little meaning. This is because the ego has always interposed between the seeker and the truth. Christian worship is largely the worship of the personality of Christ as He appeared on earth. It ignores the continued insistence of Christ Himself on His identity with God the Father. Its highest idea of Love goes no further than a desire for the approximation of the worshipper's personality to that of Christ. Finally, in all its speculations concerning a future life Christian theology has insisted on the survival of personality and the recognition of those we loved on earth, their companionship in an eternal Paradise 'where partings are no more.'

Other religions have developed the idea of Paradise with its complementary idea of Hell. Even Hinduism, the most philosophical of all, is not without its Northern Paradise of Uttera-Kuru where those who have sought perfection through

yoga continue to exist for centuries amid scenes of sensuous delight. Yet religion, whose one concern for us is the adjustment of the particular to the universal, of variety to unity, has no place for the blurred and fading visions of Paradise and Hell. As local habitations for the transient embodiments of good or evil, they belong, if anywhere, to the realm of art, of play and fancy which, arising from the Creative Dream, is expressed on canvas and in poetry and legend. So whether we read Dante and Milton or the Revelation of St John, it is not for their significance as theology, but for visions of beauty and anguish which belong to a world of poetic ideas and imagery alone. For neither joy nor sorrow can exist in a state which transcends all human emotions unless we are to accept the idea, inherited from a debased Buddhism, of a *hun*, or soul clothed in flesh, which at death goes to the lower world where it is judged and receives reward or punishment according to its earthly merit. Many curious parallels abound between the Buddhist conceptions of Hell and those of mediæval Christianity. And in the Taoist treatise 'On Response and Retribution' there are correspondences with Dante's *Inferno*. Yet even here we find, in the following remarkable passage, the real location of Hell and Heaven: 'Hell and Heaven are in your own heart. Unless Heaven reside within you, the mere reading or reciting of sacred books profiteth nothing.'

The Way and the Wayfarer are one, and he who follows the true way of his own heart will finally reach paradise and the land of the immortals. For it is here and now that the recognition of

paradise and immortality begins, or the retribution of hell overtakes us, not in some tardy hereafter as a reward of virtue or punishment of sin. The thought-forms of either realm hover round each path. If we take the path of reality and make it our own, all forms of beauty and abiding joy will encompass us ; on the path of illusion lurk the forms of ugliness and terror and the abiding fear of dissolution. Yet neither belongs to any static world in time or space. As we proceed, Heaven broadens into wider horizons about us, Hell deepens on either side. And both are dreams. Yet from dreams we awake to the creative activity which they engender and make of this world our Heaven or Hell. All human ideas of eternal, unalloyed happiness or pain are fallacious since they transfer to the hereafter of Being the temporal processes of Becoming. Nirvana, which means literally 'a dying out,' and is applied to a condition of mind from which desire and consequent sinfulness has departed, is often referred to as a 'state of bliss.' But no definition is adequate, and those who have the apprehension of a future state will sheathe imagination with the words of St Paul :

' What no eye has ever seen,  
What no ear has ever heard,  
What never entered the mind of man,  
God has prepared all that for those  
who love Him.'

This is not to say that a sense of apprehension should not be cultivated. The æsthetic sense of China and Japan differs profoundly from that of the West because it acknowledges no barrier, no

water-tight compartment separating art from religion. The great art of the Far East is religious since it is concerned with that which underlies the form of things, with the revelations of light and rhythm which belong to reality alone. In a volume of stories dealing with the occult, L. Adams Beck gives a wonderful picture of the vital form of a tree as it appeared to the eye of the mind concentrated upon it :

‘ I no longer saw the great tree except as a shadow—as its own shadow cast flat on the earth by sunshine, but in its place stood—what ?

‘ Something of pure light, a mild yet vivid flame that projected what I had thought the real tree as its shadow, green as the transparence of aquamarine with moving light that circulated through it, breaking into pale fire at certain points. . . . The upper part broke into feathers of flame—but I knew that flame could never burn. It was cool as water. It was growth, life, the ardency of sunshine, the sweeping of heavenly rains drunk in delight by the psychic roots. It swayed softly as on a wind of the spirit with all its glory of leafage. It was a divine thought of beauty such as no eye can see nor ear hear until both are opened, and yet it was allied to the poor shadow it cast upon earth which must wither and perish in its due season, while the essential stood immortal. All light is one, the cosmic life-blood, but it takes different shapes for its manifestations. The united life of all trees stood revealed to me. The conception—the primal idea of them.’

In Chinese and Japanese art both the inward eye and ear are opened and the senses of sight and hearing are recognized in their true value as



symbols of vision and harmony. Yet something of the inward revelation is made visible and audible to those who have eyes to see and ears to hear. And that something has already been referred to as 'Rhythmic Vitality, or Spiritual Rhythm expressed in the movement of life.'

The failure of both China and Japan lies in the fact that both nations have hitherto kept the great principle of Rhythmic Vitality apart from all other life-movement than that of art. In other words, they have failed to recognize the art of life. Their poets and artists by entering into the spiritual rhythm of all things, by sounding the very depth of their own being 'learnt to live and think and feel creatively,' and so attained the failure of comparative success we call completion. They were loath to apply their own principles to the commoner everyday aspects of life. They were content to leave them expressed in poetry and pictorial art. They dreamt of Paradise on earth but rarely allowed it to emerge beyond the boundaries of parchment and scroll. Many of them, however, were great ministers and administrators and magistrates and even emperors wielding supreme power of life and death over millions. They saw life whole, and because of this there are brief epochs in the history of both countries when the halcyon days of happiness set in for all from ruler to poorest peasant. Such periods occur in China at the beginning of the T'ang dynasty, reach their zenith towards the end of the Sung dynasty, and finally pass from the land under the two great emperors of the Ch'ing—K'ang Hsi and Ch'ien Lung.

In Japan they begin towards the end of the 6th century A.D., in the reign of the Empress Suiko, break into flower in the 14th century under Yoshimitsu of the Ashikaga dynasty, and fade with the long autumn peace of the Tokugawa dynasty established by Iyeyasu in the 17th century. The world has never been nearer to Heaven on earth than it was in China at the beginning of the 12th century, or in Japan, where the anti-cyclone of Sung inspiration and serenity drifted, during the 14th century. Athens in the age of Pericles, the city of a privileged and leisured caste, upheld by slave labour, has nothing to compare with these. If life is indeed an art, its application must be universal. So long as it remains the exclusive possession of a wealthy class or æsthetic coterie, the art of life is nothing more than a convenient slogan for dilettante selfishness. The Creative Dream must broaden out until it covers life itself, until the dream becomes transmuted into reality, when the towers and pinacles of man's response begin to mount and soar through the golden haze. Or else it will ebb back or flicker out in the futility of Day Dream, through which we endeavour to escape from the call of life and the burden we dare not shoulder.

In entrusting the administration of affairs to a literary class the Chinese have partially recognized a great truth. Government is an art in itself, the art of leading, directing and, it should be added, inspiring those who are governed. And only an artist in life is capable of carrying out the three functions of government impartially. All art is expressed through the capacity of the artist to adjust himself to his material. And if men are to

be our material we must be artists in humanity before we are able to take up the reins of government. Nor is it for us to be moulders of men but for the nobler qualities of men to draw us into their pattern. Then and only then shall we be capable of becoming a pattern and an example to others. This is the one lesson above all others which we may learn from the Far East, that *Art is the result of collaboration between life and life*. There is no dead material on which the artist may work his unfettered will. The success of a picture or a poem will depend upon the vitality of the artist and his perception of vitality in the subject chosen. He will not aim at imitation, since the surface of things is not his goal. His aim is nothing less than reproduction through life responding to life. He has gone beyond sex, beyond the narrower circle of human relations into the affinities and affirmations of the Universe, and 'the fusion of the rhythm of the spirit with the movement of living things' has possessed him. Not lightly do we seek to enter and mingle with the life without us. Home is the starting-place of exploration, self the beginning of adventure. With the dawn of imagination we are liberated into a world of dreams. The mind is at work in two directions. It seeks an outlet into the objective world of becoming and an inlet into the sea of being whence it came.

To the young and sensitive mind it would appear as if two different and contending worlds were calling—one without and one within. As the Western child passes through the stages of puberty and adolescence he is more and more inclined to listen to the voice without and to escape into the

world of the senses. Again there comes a brief period between adolescence and manhood when dreams 'fire the mind and make the feet of young men restless.' Then one by one they are caught up and converted into the mechanism of life. And those who protest address their prayers not to the God 'whose service is perfect freedom' but to the very deity from whose thrall they would escape. For all true freedom must come from within, from the recognition by man of man as a free agent making his individual contribution to the general good. The only freedom to which all men are entitled as their birthright is creative freedom, the freedom to create themselves within the community. The work they do is simply the outward expression of their self-createness. All else is slavery, enthrallment by desires, passions and vanities. Neither can the individual be re-created from without, by the fiat of the state or any body of despotism working on the human will. By law you may curb the animal in man, but you cannot control the divinity any more than you can abolish it by promulgation and decree. There is only one compulsion and one control, and that is from within man himself. The first step towards freedom is to set free. We must unseal the spiritual forces within ourselves that are striving for outlet.

But the mind—the human, reasonable, intelligent mind—should be the controller and master in all things, spiritual or material. The finer emotions of selfless love and aspiration are inexhaustible, yet even they must submit to the rule of law and order. A man who is all altruism from

dawn to sunset is either a bore or a bogey. And if we must go to school before we become masters of the art of life, our teachers shall be neither priests nor politicians, but poets. For as Mr Fausset has pointed out :

‘ In the great creative writers of the world we see men striving to complete themselves through intelligence, to extend the province of experience over which human understanding rules, to bring judgment into the life of instinct, to certify and transform feeling and, by ordering it, to give it objective significance. . . . The whole significance of a great poet lies in the resistance of his thought to valueless feeling, in his unwearying struggle to know his feelings to their very depths, and by knowing them thus to separate what is fictitious and egotistic in them from what is at once individually conceived and universally true.’

But ‘ valueless feeling ’ is simply surface feeling, another term for shallow emotion and sentiment ; day dreams expressed from vanity, not creative dreams wrought in words, in stone, in colour and line through the urge from within. All creative activity comes from entering within ourselves, from releasing the deeper well-springs of our being. To possess the Inner Life is the first step towards possessing the world, not as capitalists and kings, but as poets and philosophers. But Lao Tzū reminds us that

‘ To possess Inner Life  
We enter it by our own private doorway.  
We do this in order to know in overflowing fullness  
The possession of Inner Life’s activity.’

Dr Isabella Mears in a commentary passage says :

‘ By our own doorway we come into our earthly life, and by our own doorway we leave it. So, the Sage tells us, by our own doorway we enter into consciousness of our inner spiritual life. We cannot enter by another man’s door, only by our own individual, private door. Each one who thus enters into the conscious possession of his spiritual life begins at once to realize that it is superabundant, overflowing, ever freshly springing up. It flows out from us to others in a living stream of love, often unconsciously to ourselves, often consciously, but always fruitfully.’

By entering into the contemplative dream we make contact with the divinity within ourselves, with the force through which alone we came into the world—of love obliterating all distinctions of sex in unity, and producing One which is the symbol of God Himself. Outwardly we reflect a hundred different images to a hundred different people. We are wise men and fools, cynics and idealists, dreamers and designers, lovable and hateful, proud and humble, of great or little or no account according to the refraction of our light from within passing into a medium of different density. But turn back and look within to the source of many broken lights and you will find but one—the white light of Unity unbroken. Everyone contains within himself the dream of the Designer, the power of the Controller and the harmony of the Law by which the worlds are shaped, from the anarchy of absolute freedom, which is Pure mind, to the rule of Creative freedom, which is mind working in matter. There is a God

whom both the science of the West and the religion of the East are uniting to worship. Sir James Jeans in *The Mysterious Universe* has recently suggested that the universe is a creation on the lines of pure mathematics, and that Nature works

‘according to the laws of pure mathematics, and the Great Architect of the Universe now begins to appear as a pure Mathematician. . . . Mind no longer appears as an accidental intruder into the realm of matter ; we are beginning to suspect that we ought rather to hail it as the creator and governor of the realm of matter—not, of course, our individual minds, but the mind, in which the atoms out of which our individual minds have grown exist as thoughts.’

Again, the mind of God works through the visible Universe in waves ‘of two kinds—bottled-up waves, which we call matter, and unbottled waves, which we call light. If annihilation of matter occurs, the process is merely that of unbottling imprisoned wave-energy and setting it free to travel through space.’

In a recent review of the same book, Mr J. C. Squire, the well-known critic, gives parallels from the poets and philosophers :

‘Everything is a thought in the mind of God.’

‘They have all gone into the World of Light.’

‘I saw Eternity the other Night,  
Like a Great Ring of Endless Light.’

And because Mathematics is the science of number and quantity, the following quotation from the Book of Wisdom, xi. 20, might well be added :

‘ God doeth all things in number and measure and weight.’

But there is no need to draw the somewhat premature conclusion that God is solely Pure Mathematician. In a letter to *The Times*, Sir William Schooling, himself a distinguished mathematician, points out that because the universe can best be explained in terms of mathematics it does not follow that it is the thought or design of a mathematician.

‘ By familiar methods we can draw, or photograph, the sound waves made by any instrument when playing a musical note. We can thus produce a moving picture of all the sound waves that result from playing a sonata by Beethoven ; the length, height, and shape of the waves give us the pitch, loudness, and quality of the note, and the curve which represents the wave is itself a mathematical expression, or is capable of being stated in mathematical terms. . . . But I cannot think that I should learn the most important truths about a sonata from an inspection of the sound waves ; nor should I be justified in the inference that Beethoven was a pure mathematician.’

Sir William would prefer to think

‘ that the thought, or design of the universe is that of a great poet, as Dr Whitehead suggests ; of a great lover, as Sir Francis Younghusband would have us believe ; or of a great mystery of any other type which the highest flights of our imagination can vaguely picture.’

Let us praise all these famous men, accepting gratefully and with due regard their visions of Him.



Then, with the inward eye of vision, we may see their broken and refracted lights of Him streaming into One. For He who is the Pure Mathematician, and the Great Architect, is also the Supreme Poet, and the World-Lover, and the Final Mystery that no man has unveiled. It is good that science should keep the Sabbath, that men of genius like Whitehead, and Jeans, and Eddington should lay aside their work for a while to dream the Contemplative Dream. He whom they seek is not to be found by telescope or microscope, neither is He to be sought in the laboratory nor revealed by any process of chemical analysis. As the various branches which are comprehended in the name of Science move forward they bring with them their sign-posts to show the way they are going. The sign-posts of physics and mathematics have advanced ; they are pointing away from materialism in the direction of Pure Spirit. But man cannot advance by means of sign-posts alone. A mere intellectual assent to the probability of a divine origin, design and ordered sequence is not sufficient. There can be no movement of the creature towards the Creator without spirituality. And what is spirituality in man but the light within him which alone illuminates the darkness, and the urge within which speeds him on his way ?

• Only when we have finally put away the selfish desire for personal survival and the continuance of earthly ties shall we attain the vision of a true immortality, of the individual soul at one with the Universal and the lesser loves contained within the greater. All teaching of the East from India to China, and including the mystical concepts of

Muhammedan Sufism, is the teaching of Comprehension. The greater comprehends the lesser which it has engendered ; the lesser apprehends the greater to which, in due course, it will return ; not to sink into the sea of annihilation, or to be absorbed in the obliterating level of pantheism, but to take its part in the Universal Consciousness through life-experience. Christianity through its Fourth Gospel, Taoism through the *Tao Teh King*, and Buddhism through its Mahayana doctrine, which obtains in China and Japan, are agreed in the greatest essential of all : 'Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? The words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself : but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works.'

God is a Spirit and

'the spirit is not a thing material and sensual, however ethereally or astrally you may conceive it. It is a transcendental existence, which knows no limiting conditions such as space, time, or causation. . . . There is but one great spirit, and we individuals are its temporal manifestations. We are eternal when we do the will of the great spirit ; we are doomed when we protest against it in our egotism and ignorance. We obey, and we live. We defy, and we are thrown into the fire which quencheth not.'

And as the great religions of the world are at one in the acknowledgment of the light and power within, so the latest scientific advance of to-day is in the direction of Chinese and Japanese thought of long ago. The astronomer resting in contempla-

tion from his labours has looked beyond the range of telescope and gone beyond all mathematical calculation to a mind that works through mathematics. But the old Chinese astronomer and mystic who wrote the Yih King more than a thousand years B.C. has widened the circle so as to include the contemplative dreams of all the distinguished men who have seen one aspect of the Eternal Mind.

‘The whole concept of the Yih King,’ says Dr Isabella Mears, its latest translator, ‘is in terms of mathematics ; for God chooses to reveal Himself to the human soul through the works of Nature, which are all based upon number and upon geometric design. . . . It is interesting to note that the most ancient Chinese authority, and the most modern scientific authority unite in proclaiming that the Greatest Utmost One, the Great Architect of the Universe, “is a pure mathematician.” But the Chinese Sage is not content with this partial definition, for to him the Greatest Utmost One is also all-loving and all-powerful.

‘Modern scientists have the advantage of skilled methods and elaborate instruments for the investigation of Nature’s secrets. The Sages received their knowledge through inspiration or intuition ; they worked from the Centre, from the One to the many. Scientists, working by the observation of the many, are arriving at a true concept of the One. . . . The work of astronomers is now being used to guide men to a truer knowledge of the Being and the wisdom of the Creator. Thus it may be said that the mathematical concept is the all-containing vessel (or mode) for the revelation of God to mankind. Yet we know, and it is implied in the Yih King, that there is a deeper revelation through man’s inner

nature, a revelation of Love, and of Power to cope with all the difficulties of circumstances.

‘Can the Source of energy become exhausted? Sir James Jeans says: “Entropy must for ever increase: it cannot stand still until it has increased so far that it can increase no further. When this stage is reached, further progress will be impossible, and the Universe will be dead.”

‘In the Yih King, it is said that Life is inherent in Form, but that it transcends Form. Also it is said that *Creative Energy* is unceasing, eternal and inexhaustible, because it is generated at will by the Omnipotent spirit of God.

‘Scientists appear to consider that Energy is obtained by the disintegration or annihilation of matter. The Sages appear to have considered that matter is the result of and is the outward sign of the Energy generated as aforesaid. If we are entirely dependent upon the energy that is at the present moment stored in the material substance of which the sun is composed (the energy that is being continually liberated by the slow annihilation of that substance), then truly there appears to be nothing but darkness, death, and destruction before us. But if we are dependent upon the True Source of Energy, then we, as members of Cosmic Man, may become aware of transmutational-renewal, and of adaptation to circumstance, and so continue to live, no matter what changes may continue to take place in the manifestations of Life.

‘All Created forms, having a beginning, must also have an ending; that which is not essential falls away and dies, but the Creative Life does not die.’

This is the answer of man made in the image of the Creator. He knows himself to be immortal according to his measure of Creative energy that

drives him forward to no final goal or task unfinished. His work in the calling of life supplies him with fuel to burn and liberates the driving-power of creative energy that in turn consumes his leisure. And on the Seventh Day he returns to rest and bathe in the inexhaustible source of all energy, and, with heart cleansed and purified, await the still more wonderful to-morrow.

Reading the Pali text-books of early Indian Buddhism is like sitting in a darkened cinema, where the weary reel of life-film appearing, changing, passing, vanishing is uncoiled in perpetuity. 'If one grows tired of this endless phantom-show, realizes that it is all illusory, then Buddhism teaches that there is a way of escape from its boredom.'

But the Way of China and of Japan is not the Way of Escape from boredom but the Way of Joy in life-fulfilment, which is also the Way of Christ. Lao Tzū speaks with no uncertain voice, and Chinese art and poetry are radiant from his inspiration. The Taoist brew of life is sweet. It is far more difficult to form a just estimate of Buddhism, since there are two entirely different schools of Buddhism roughly divided into Hinayana and Mahayana. Broadly speaking, the difference between them is this : 'Mahayanism is more liberal and progressive . . . Hinayanism, on the other hand, is somewhat conservative and may be considered in many points to be a *rationalistic-ethical* system simply.'

But the fine flower of Mahayana is to be found in the Zen teaching, where mind and body are both considered and the body is made into a fitting vehicle for the mind and the mind into a power of

control over every action. Even the smallest task must be done in the right way. The followers of Zen are no ascetic refugees from the horrors of life but the most practical students of the art of life, and the science of power, and 'direct communion with the inner nature of things' through meditation. Those who wish to pursue the subject further should read Chap. XXIX of Mrs Adams Beck's *The Story of Oriental Philosophy*, which gives the clearest and most concise exposition of Zen tenets. Our interest here in Zen is solely through the Creative Dream which finds its outlet in art and literature.

Yet if we were to attempt on canvas a portrait, a symbol in outline of the human soul, we should remember Janus, the two-faced god, looking backward into the past and forward into the future. For the soul of man is one, but its aspects are two, one looking inward, seeking union with the Self which it reflects, the other looking outward, seeking the fulfilment of life, through the Creative Dream into the conscious awakening of Creative Energy and the infinite variety of life. When the eyes of the one are opened the eyes of the other are closed. But God is in the centre and not lurking at some point in the far circumference. So we may return to Him at the very centre of our being or adventure with Him through His world of becoming in sunlit and moonlit spaces, where and when He wills.

*Note*—Definition is limitation, and to define what we mean by the word *God* is to limit the limitless, a task beyond all human power. Only here and there is it possible to catch some vision of His

attributes—‘God is Love,’ ‘He is the Great Mathematician,’ ‘He is Pure Thought,’ ‘God is a Spirit.’ All these are merely partial glimpses of a wholeness that cannot be conceived. It would hardly be necessary to add that the word, which is a mere symbol, and a gathering together of all His attributes, is used in no anthropomorphic sense.

## CHAPTER V

### THE DREAM OF PARADISE

*'And I saw a new heaven and a new earth : for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away ; and there was no more sea.'*—Rev. xxi. 1.

THE religious history of mankind is strewn with the crumbling ruins of Paradise and the red-rusted machinery of Hell. While there seems to have been a consensus of opinion on the location of Hell as a place below the earth, where the souls of the unrighteous are tormented through Eternity, the conception of Heaven or Paradise varies profoundly according to the age and nation, credulity or national characteristics.

It is somewhere in stellar space above the earth.

It is a new earth taking the place of the old one destroyed by fire.

It has 'a local habitation and a name,' such as Mount Olympus, on the borders of Thessaly ; as Mount Meru or Sumeru, which is identified with the Kwan-lun Mountains in the Hindu Kush. It is the Zoroastrian Mount Alburz ; the Hebrew Mountain of Paradise mentioned in Ezekiel, or the Eden of the four rivers of Genesis. In the Taoist mythology the Kwan-lun Mountains are the abode of Hsi Wang Mu, the Queen Mother of the West. The idea of Paradise invariably begins on earth, and in course of time soars through the clouds



as peak after peak of Olympus or Mount Meru vanish into the upper spaces, bearing with them the gods, the divinities, the genii, and the bodhisats.

In the religion of ancient Egypt the heart is weighed in the Hall of Osiris, and if the soul is found worthy it is conducted to the fields of Paradise. There Neith the Goddess attends the dead, and gives him the waters of life from her sycamore tree, and red beer and corn are his drink and food. The cool breeze blows on his face, and the odour of sweet flowers surrounds him. He tills the fields of Aalu, where the corn grows seven cubits high. A wall of steel surrounds his abode, and through its gate the sun goes out at dawn !

The Chaldean idea of Heaven is a place of happy fields under a silver sky, where ancient seers sit wearing their crowns and drinking from perennial streams.

But the Zoroastrian conception of a future state is far more beautiful and poetic than any of these :

‘ When the good man dies his soul sits at the head of his grave repeating the words “ Blessed is the man to whom the Lord hath granted his desires.” After the third night, at dawn, a sweet-smelling breeze touches the soul, waving over the trees, breathing from the south, and bearing her upwards. A fair maiden of fifteen years appears to her and the soul asks, “ What maiden art thou whom I have seen here as the fairest of maidens in body ? ” Then replies to him his own law : “ I am thy good thoughts, words and works, thy good law, thine own law of thine own body.” Then the guardian angel which is the symbol of the soul’s Karma, or consequence of all her actions in life, takes with it the happy spirit to rest beneath the

trees of a luxuriant grove, where she may repeat the prayers and praises of Ahura Mazda. Thence refreshed and encouraged the soul steps forward.

‘The soul of the pure man goes the first step and arrives at the Paradise of good thought ; the second step and arrives at the Paradise of the good word ; it goes the third step and arrives at the Paradise of the good deed ; it takes the fourth step and arrives at the Eternal Lights.’

Here, approaching the throne of God, the soul dwells secure, partaking the divine banquet and the shining food. The picture of a sensuous Paradise, differing only in details from the rest, is redeemed by the allegory of the threefold guardian angel, of good thought, good word, good deed interceding with God on the soul's behalf.

The Jew is essentially a materialist and must needs transport his earthly delights into another world.

‘In the future happy age,’ says Josephus, ‘after the judgment of the wicked, there will be inhabitants of heaven and of earth, but no more birth, no wild animals, no storms, no darkness nor change. Man will be able to walk across the sea, and to ascend into heaven ; he will never grow old nor die, but continue to enjoy a material or semi-material existence in his spiritual body.’

The Muhammedan Paradise exceeds all others in its presentation of physical pleasures and luxuriant backgrounds. The resurrection is pictured as both corporeal and spiritual, and extended to all created beings, whether angels, genii, men, or animals. On Judgment Day those who are admitted into

Paradise will be gathered on the right hand, and those who are destined for perdition on the left. As for the righteous :

‘ They shall dwell in gardens of delight. Reposing on couches adorned with gold and precious stones ; sitting opposite to one another thereon. Youths, who shall continue in their bloom for ever, shall go round about to attend them with goblets, and beakers, and a cup of flowing wine ; their heads shall not ache by drinking the same, neither shall their reason be disturbed ; and with fruits of the sorts which they shall choose, and the flesh of birds of the kind which they shall desire. And there shall accompany them bright and dark-eyed damsels resembling pearls hidden in their shells, as a reward for that which they have wrought. They shall not hear therein any vain discourse, nor any charge of sin ; but only the salutation, Peace ! Peace ! And the companions of the right hand . . . shall have their abode amid thornless lote trees and banana trees with piles of fruit under outspread shade and nigh to flowing water ; and they shall repose on beds upraised. Verily we have created for them the damsels of Paradise ; and made them virgins, darlings of equal age (with their husbands) for the delight of the companions of the right. . . . And God will guard them from the evil of that day and will cast on them brightness and joy ; and their reward for their patience shall be Paradise and silk ! reclining thereon upon couches, they shall neither see therein sun nor piercing cold ; and close down upon them shall be its shadows ; and lowered over them its fruits to call ; and they shall be served round with vessels of silver and goblets that are as flagons—flagons of silver—which they shall mete out ! ’<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Koran, chaps. xliv, lxxvi.

And there is much more on the same lines concerning cups 'tempered with ginger,' 'garments of green-embroidered satin and brocade' and 'bracelets of silver.' No religion has ever promised so much in sensuous reward to its followers. At worst a glorious death in battle with the unbeliever, sleep for a second of Eternity, for what is 50,000 years in Allah's sight! Then the trumpet of Israfil, the Judgment Day, and the separation of the Companions of the Right from those of the Left, whose destination is one of the seven circles of Hell, the third of which, called al Hutama, is assigned to Christians.

In ancient India of the Vedic Period (*circa* 2000–1400 B.C.) we get occasional naïve glimpses of a future world through the hymns of the Rig Veda. The early Aryans were essentially a pastoral folk settled in the North-West along the banks of the Indus and its five tributaries. Their problems were those of an active, martial and yet industrial people engaged in extending its boundaries and breaking up the soil. Wealth and happiness were their main pursuits, and their religion is the clear reflection of a favouring sky shining upon a favoured race. Yama was their Lord of Heaven, not the terrible Ruler of Hell who appears in the later Puranas, but a kindly and beneficent deity under whom the happiness of the departed soul is continued and enhanced.

'O thou deceased! proceed to the same place where our forefathers have gone, by the same path which they followed. The two kings, Yama and Varuna, are pleased with the offerings; go and see them.

‘Go to that happy heaven and mix with the early forefathers. Mix with Yama and with the fruits of thy virtuous deeds. Leave sin behind, enter thy home.

‘O ye ghosts ! leave this place, go away, move away. For the forefathers have prepared a place for the deceased. That place is beautified with day, with sparkling waters and with light ; Yama assigns this place to the dead.

‘O thou deceased ! these two dogs have four eyes each, and a strange colour. Go past them quickly. Then proceed by the beautiful path to those wise forefathers, who spend their time in joy and happiness with Yama.’

Again, in the hymns to Soma, at first the juice of a plant made into wine and used for sacrificial libations, later elevated to the rank of a god, we get a similar vision of a future state :

‘O flowing Soma ! take me to that immortal and imperishable abode where light dwells eternal, and which is in heaven. Flow, Soma ! for Indra.

‘Take me where Yama is King, where there are the gates of heaven, and where mighty rivers flow. Take me there and make me immortal. Flow, Soma ! for Indra.

‘Take me where there is the third heaven, where there is the third realm of light above the sky, and where one can wander at his will. Take me there and make me immortal. Flow, Soma ! for Indra.

‘Take me where every desire is satiated, where Pradhma has his abode, where there is food and contentment. Take me there and make me immortal. Flow, Soma ! for Indra.

‘Take me where there are pleasures and joys and delights, where every desire of the anxious heart is satisfied. Take me there, and make me immortal. Flow, Soma ! for Indra.’

These are the visions of children when the world of reason and philosophy was still young ; the chants of the children of the Dawn to whom their loveliest hymns are addressed. And all their pictures of a celestial abode are but the transference of earthly hopes and desires and surroundings to a more ethereal region. Meanwhile the Aryans are on the move—westward into Europe, southward into India. Following the southward migration as it flows down the valley of the Ganges, we become aware of a gradual change in the national character. The emigrants are conducting a warfare on two fronts—against the aborigines, and against the climate. In the first they prevail, in the second they succumb.

‘ So, the splendid mental energy of the Aryans, which expressed itself in materialistic evolution in Europe, retreated from the difficulties of a similar evolution in India. But the Hindu Aryans did not permit their racial mental efficiency to succumb. Restrained from objective utilitarian activity, they sought subjective spiritual activity instead.’

Gradually the ‘ mighty rivers ’ and ‘ sparkling waters,’ the abode of ‘ pleasures and joys and delights ’ where ‘ food and contentment ’ abound, vanish. The Pitris or departed ancestors of earlier generations no longer welcome their descendants to the national Valhalla. The cool breeze of dawn over the Indus gives place to the glow of molten noons upon the Ganges and the second period of the Aryans in India has begun. And no sooner have the Vedas been compiled and arranged than they commence to lose their influence among a

people who had memorized them down from father to son as part of the sacred duties of life. This second period is more momentous than any before or after. Its five eventful centuries are to see the period of great wars immortalized in the *Maha-Bharata*, the rise of caste, and the beginning of the greatest system of spiritual contemplative philosophy the world has ever seen, in the *Upanishads*. From 1000 to 300 B.C. this story of the Hindu mind turning away from material conquest to spiritual has been evolved and added to by poet, seer and dreamer. The Brahman priest, occupied with ritual and ceremony and his own comfort and domination over the laity, had no hand in it. If you want to know the Brahman you must read the *Mantras* and *Brahmanas*, and after them the *Puranas* and the *Tantras*. In all of these you will see the priest occupied in establishing his hold over the people through sacrificial rites to magic. The *Upanishads*, on the other hand, are the reinterpretation of the *Vedas* by the free Aryan mind, the revolt of the *Kshatriya* or warrior class against the shackles imposed by dogma and formalism. A little later on we shall hear their message to the human soul when we come to the final parting of the ways and learn to discriminate between Man's dreams of an Earth-reflecting Heaven and his apprehension of the ultimate Self.

The 6th century B.C. witnesses the dawn of Buddhism. Of all the great world-teachers Buddha is the least of this world and the most philosophic. Deeply versed in the *Upanishads*, he revitalizes the cold and abstract speculations of Kapila, the founder of the *Sankhya* system in the

8th century. Self-cultivation and the restraint of the passions are the heart of his doctrine. Pity and Charity are the two human virtues which remove him from the exclusive spheres of philosophy and place him among the Masters of religion. Like Christ, he appeals to the poor, the lowly, and the suffering ; like Christ, his kingdom is not of this world. For him all life is a passing from unreality and illusion into the absolute reality of Nirvana. Mr J. E. Ellam sums up the profound difference between the Buddhist teaching on the subject of a future life and that of Christianity, Hinduism and Muhammedanism, and points out that in Buddhism

‘ that which we call our “ life ” is only the outward reflection of our own inner being, or state of consciousness, and also the fact that mind cannot manifest itself without a material substratum. Thus the Christian sees a Christian heaven ; the Hindu, the Muhammedan, and so on, each finds reduplicated his own conception of what a sublimated earth-life might be. All these planes of being, from the highest to the lowest, have their existence in space and time. They have their arising, transition, passing away and re-arising ; and the beings themselves are the same *namarupa* (*i.e.* psychical-physical) as man. All are phenomenal, transitory, illusory.’

And Buddhism as a religion is no exception to the general rule of things. It has its ‘ arising, transition, passing away and re-arising.’ The band of wandering monks and preachers vanishes into the forests of time ; the monk is immured in the monastery ; the teaching is encased in ceremonial and formalism ; chants and liturgies and the smoke



of incense come between the worshipper and the moon of Buddhahood. The people cannot stand the doctrine of Nirvana. It is too far away, too unsubstantial, too deep for human conception. Give us Heaven ! By Heaven they mean a transference of earthly desires and human ties to a background of unchanging yet earthly beauty with three seasons—Spring, Summer and Autumn—blended into one. And this is Sukhavati, the Buddhist Land of Bliss, where Amitabha the Father reigns with Avalokitésvara the Son, and Mahâsthâma the Spirit of Power. For those who desire to be born in the Land of Bliss it is laid down that they should cultivate a threefold goodness.

‘ Firstly, they should act filially towards their parents and support them ; serve and respect their teachers and elders ; be of compassionate mind, abstain from doing any injury, and cultivate the ten virtuous actions. Secondly, they should take and observe the vow of seeking refuge with the Three Jewels,<sup>1</sup> fulfil all moral precepts, and not lower their dignity or neglect any ceremonial observance. Thirdly, they should give their whole mind to the attainment of the Bodhi (perfect wisdom), deeply believe in (the principle of) cause and effect, study and recite (the Sutras of) the Mahayana doctrine, and persuade and encourage others who pursue the same course as themselves.’

Is the reward commensurate with so much well-doing and right-living ? Let us see !

‘ The world called Sukhavati . . . is prosperous, rich, good to live in, fertile, lovely, and filled with

<sup>1</sup> The Buddha, the Law of Buddha, and the Community of Saints.

many gods and men. Then, O Ananda, in that world there are neither hells, nor the brute creation, nor the realm of departed spirits, nor bodies of Asuras, nor untimely births. And there do not appear in this world such gems as are known in the world Sukhavati.

‘Now, O Ananda, that world is fragrant with several sweet-smelling scents, rich in manifold flowers and fruits, adorned with gem trees, and frequented by tribes of manifold sweet-voiced birds. . . . And those gem trees are of several colours, of many colours, and of many hundred thousand colours. There are gem trees there of golden-colour, and made of gold. There are those of silver-colour and made of silver. There are those of beryl-colour and made of beryl. There are those of crystal-colour and made of crystal. . . .’

And the catalogue continues with trees of coral, and red pearl, and of diamonds, of trees with two, three or more kinds of different gems, of their branches and trunks and roots, their flowers and fruits pleasant to touch, and fragrant. There are no mountains nor kings of mountains in this Land of Bliss, for ‘the country is level on every side.’ And here great rivers abound ‘carrying water of different sweet odour, carrying bunches of flowers adorned with various gems, resounding with sweet voices.’ Again we are listening to music :

‘There proceeds from an instrument which consists of a hundred thousand Kotis of parts, which embodies heavenly music and is played by clever people, the same delightful sound which proceeds from those great rivers, the sound which is deep, unknown, incomprehensible, clear, pleasant to the ear, touching the heart, beloved, sweet, delightful,

never tiring, never disagreeable, pleasant to hear, as if it always said, "non-eternal, peaceful, unreal."'

As in the Vedas, every wish of those who dwell in Paradise is fulfilled. They sport in streams whose waters rise, according to their desire, from ankle to neck; that are warm or cold as their pleasure wills. They are endowed with

'such colour, strength, vigour, height and breadth, dominion and accumulation of virtue; with such enjoyments of dress, ornaments, gardens, palaces, and pavilions; and such enjoyments of touch, taste, smell, and sound. . . . Whatever food they desire, such food they perceive, as if it were taken, and become delighted in body and mind.'

Then follows a list of their possible requirements in the shape of 'musical instruments, banners, flags, umbrellas, cloaks, powders, ointments, garlands, and scents.' Lastly, the dwelling-places of the heart's desire are theirs to possess, with girl-attendants to minister to their pleasures :

'And if they desire a palace, with colours and emblems of such and such height and width, adorned with a hundred thousand gates made with different jewels, covered with different heavenly flowers, full of couches strewn with beautiful cushions, then exactly such a palace appears before them. And in these delightful palaces they dwell, play, sport, walk about, being honoured, and surrounded by seven times seven thousand Apsaras.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In Hindu mythology the Apsaras were first spirits of the clouds and waters. Later on they conduct the souls of fallen heroes to Paradise, where they serve them, as the houris of Muhammed serve the souls of the Faithful.

In Sukhavati the winds blow everywhere in the four quarters scattering fresh flowers. And although there is no mention of sun, moon, planets, constellations, and stars, or blinding darkness, 'at the proper time clouds full of heavenly perfumed water pour down heavenly flowers of all colours ; heavenly seven jewels, heavenly sandal-wood powder, and heavenly umbrellas, flags, and banners.' And other heavenly flowers unfold in the sky, and canopies and umbrellas are unfurled, while the music of instruments and the dancing of heavenly Apsaras are heard and seen.

Surely the sky of this Land of Bliss is somewhat overloaded, and the effect of a shower of umbrellas and sandal-wood powder somewhat blinding ! We have only to form a picture of this crowded sky, this crapulent Paradise, on whose meadows the poet has poured a whole cornucopia of luscious epithets, to note the jungle-mindedness of it all. Yet we must be fair to India and to the Aryan mind at its best and noblest. Far away and beyond the Indus the fathers of the race have woven the light fantasies of the dawn into sheer poetry :

- ' She throws garments gay round her like a dancing girl ;  
E'en as a cow her udder, she displays her breast.  
Creating light for all the world, Dawn has unbarred  
The gates of darkness as when cows break from their stall.
- ' Her radiant shimmer has appeared before us ;  
It spreads, and drives away the swarthy monster.  
As one anoints the post at sacrifices,  
The daughter of the sky extends her lustre.
- ' We have crossed to the farther shore of darkness :  
Dawn shining forth, her webs of light is weaving.  
She smiles for glory, radiant, like a lover.  
To show goodwill she, fair of face, has wakened.'

One swift glance around the waking world, one to Heaven, the eastward sky flushed and virginal with the eternal joy of youth renewed, and song is released to soar like a bird pouring out the tribute of a responsive heart into the melting silences.

Beyond the Himalayas another nation dreams of Paradise, an earthly Paradise, not transferred to the upper regions as in the Vedas or the later Buddhist myths of Sukhavati, yet world-apart from mere humanity. The Chinese are essentially an artistic people, and in many ways their affinities with the Greek Spirit are closer than those with the Indian. This is essentially so with their dreams of an after-world where the righteous dwell in peace. The Isles of the Blest have curious correspondences with the Greek idea of Elysium, though both are subject to certain modifications in the course of time. Yet in the beginning the attainment to both comes through translation, such as happened to Enoch, and not through death.

In Taoist mythology the seekers after spiritual wisdom are known as *hsien*. They are the fore-runners of the Western alchemists. Mostly they dwell remote from the haunts of man and are nourished on dew and flowers until their gross earthly nature falls away and their vitality becomes independent of matter. The bodies of the *hsien* are ethereal bodies but they are also subject to the law of change. And even when they enter into Paradise they can only attain immortality by partaking of the magic fungus called *Ling chih*.

Originally the Islands were five in number, and the first account of them is to be found in the writings of the mystical philosopher Lieh Tzū, who

appears to have lived in the 4th century B.C. The following is a description translated by Major Perceval Yetts :

‘To the east of the gulf (*i.e.* the Gulf of Chihli) . . . there is an ocean, vast in extent, and, in very truth, bottomless. In its fathomless depths is the so-called “Abyss of Assembly,” to which the waters from the eight points of the compass and from the uttermost parts of the earth, and from the streams of the Milky Way all flow. . . . Here lie the Five Isles, named Tai Yu, Yuan Chiao, Fang Hu, Ying Chou, and P’êng-lai. In height and round its base each island measures 30,000 *li*, and the circumference of the plateau on the summit of each is 9,000 *li*. Each is separated from its neighbours by a distance of 70,000 *li*. Upon their shores the terraces and pleasure-towers are built of gold and jade, and the birds and beasts are alike of unblemished white. Thick groves there are, laden with pearls and gems, and not a flower but gives forth fragrant perfume, nor a fruit but has delicious flavour. On those who eat thereof is conferred the boon of youth and immortality. The inhabitants are all *hsien* and holy sages, who pass their days in happy companionship, which the intervening ocean channels do not interrupt, for they float through the air from isle to isle in countless number.’

Once these islands were supported on the heads of huge turtles to keep them from drifting to and fro.

‘But a giant of the Lung-po country, setting out on his travels, had not taken many strides before he came to the region of the Five Islands, when with one cast of his line he hooked six of the turtles. Then, carrying them all on his back, he returned

whence he came, and their shells he used for divination by the scorching process. Thus robbed of their support, the two islands of Tai Yu and Yuan Chiao, after drifting off towards the North Pole, were lost in the vast deep ; and the *hsien* and holy sages, reckoned to number many hundreds of thousands, were thereby cut off from communication with their fellows.'

Of the three remaining islands P'êng-lai is by far the most famous. It has given its name to imperial palaces, and is the subject of countless allusions in poetry and fiction. Emperors have despatched expeditions in search of the Isles of the Blest. In 219 B.C. the great Shih Huang Ti of the Ch'in dynasty sent three thousand youths and maidens together with artisans of various kinds under the magician Hsu Fu as gifts to the Ocean Spirit in return for the herb of immortality that grew thereon. But Hsu Fu never returned. Others failed and fled, but Shih Huang Ti never abandoned hope. Time after time he came back to the terraced cliffs of Lang Ya on the Shantung coast and swept the far horizon for a glimpse of P'êng-lai. And nine years later this self-styled First Emperor, builder of the Great Wall of China and destroyer of its sacred books, died like any mortal. In 140 B.C. another emperor, Wu Ti of the Han dynasty, became obsessed with the idea of attaining *hsienship* through the transmutation of cinnabar into gold ! Like the First Emperor, he 'frequented the coast, interrogating seafaring folk, and hoping to catch sight of the Islands in the far distance.' Facing eastwards, he sacrificed to the inhabitants of P'êng-lai. In the hope of entering

into communication with *hsien*, and so learning their secret, he erected elaborate buildings for their reception if ever they could be persuaded to appear, and in one of these palaces he had models made of the Isles of the Blest.

There is yet another island often referred to in Chinese poetry under the name of Fu-sang, or Land of the Leaning Mulberries—

‘ That grow together two by two and weave  
Green bough to bough. Once in nine thousand years  
Their fruits are born ; and souls that taste thereof  
Are dowered in golden glory and assume  
Bright roving wings.’

Fu-sang is generally known as the place where the sun rises, and has been variously identified with Japan, with the island of Sakhalien, and even with Mexico. The Mulberry trees that grow in pairs and incline together are undoubtedly one of the many Chinese symbols of union between lovers. Others are the tree whose boughs are intertwined, the twin carp, the mandarin duck and drake, the peacock and peahen. Another Paradise is situated in the Kwan-lun range of hills in the West and presided over by the Fairy Queen of the *hsien* Hsi-wang-mu. Her palace stands high in the mountains and is encircled with a rampart of solid gold with battlements of precious stones. Within the grounds the trees of immortality abound, and on the borders of the Lake of Gems the Festival of Peaches is held, to which both male and female Immortals repair.

These Taoist dreams of Paradise differ profoundly from those of most nations in one respect. Attainment is not through death but translation.



‘A gradual disconnection of man from his material body by allowing it to emaciate, and his gradual transition to a state exclusively spiritual by absorbing the celestial Yang (the male principle), of which all *shen* or gods consist—this was the ideal aim of noble minds in the Taoist world.’

But this primitive and naïve conception of immortality could not remain for long in the realms of myth. The poets and artists of China have rebuilt and repeopled the shadowy islands of the Eastern seas and the cloud-capped palace of Hsi-wang-mu in the West. They are established not on the backs of giant tortoises, but on silk, and all their gems are glowing images that haunt the immortal poems of Li Po, Tu Fu and the innumerable host that is arising radiant from the dust of Time. The earthly Paradise of the Taoists has become once more what it was in the days of the T’ang and the Sung, a place of re-creation ; where broken ties are reknit, and the lost harmonies between life and life are heard again ; where

‘Gaily coloured towers

Rise up like rainbow clouds.’

But the Isles of the Blest are not for our enduring peace. Neither Shih Huang Ti nor Han Wu Ti, imperious symbols of the heart’s desire, can attain their vanishing shores. No hand of mortal seeking to elude mortality will ever grasp one golden fruit from their hidden trees of the immortals. They are myths, and as such part of the ‘unsubstantial fabric’ of the dreams which man is for ever weaving into worlds of escape from what he is pleased to call reality. Yet what is myth and what reality ?

Take, for instance, the ordinary citizen's idea of the social group which constitutes the State.

'The social group,' says Francis Delaisi, 'cannot subsist without imposing limits on the liberty of the individual or without levying contribution on the produce of his labour, and the private citizen would not consent to these sacrifices if he had not a conception of his solidarity with the group and of the services which link up his private interests with the welfare of the whole.'

'This conception, not being the fruit of scientific inquiry, can only be the figment of his imagination. Impelled by the egocentric tendency we all share, his idea of society will be formed entirely by magnifying the notions he has of his own daily life and applying them to the social group.'

Thus he attains a certain sense of security both for himself and for those who follow after him. He is himself a stabilizing force in an apparently stable community. Yet those who build on social, national or economic security are building on the sands of myth. There is no security in a rapidly changing world for class, nation or individual. And if we were to grasp all the economic laws by which we are controlled, and understand all the institutions by which we are moulded or influenced, all the subtle devices of mechanics and chemists and electricians on which our civilization is based, and say 'Lo ! here is reality !' to-morrow would mock us with the eternal question, 'Where are the realities of yesterday?' For there is no reality, nor any god of reality poised upon the flying moment, any more than there is solidity and immobility in a Universe of whirling matter. Safety lies in our adjustment of ourselves to change alone.

But we are not here together to consider safety but to seek adventure. Neither can we escape from the common problems of life by emigration to fairy-land. The economic myth differs profoundly from the religious myth in this respect—that the former is an *idea* and the latter an *ideal*. Both contain a germ of truth, and both seek to stabilize, one the position in society of the individual, one the enduring happiness of the human soul. But the former passes with the passing of a single life, and the latter is absorbed into the realms of art. For in art alone can the human myth of unending bliss survive in its draperies of ethereal matter, from the cloud-lands of the Vedic dawn to islands set ‘in blue vacuity, too faint to be descried,’ and the god-haunted mountains of Olympus, Alburz and Sumeru. And no collection of these Paradisal dreams would be complete without the sharp antidote of a witty tale from Japan. For the story of Shikaiya Masobiye follows all our dreams to their logical conclusion :

On the eighth day of the eighth moon he put out to sea ‘to escape the admirers of the full moon.’ After many perilous adventures he arrived at a mountainous island fragrant with the breath of flowers. There he met with the lost magician Hsu Fu whom the Emperor Shih Huang Ti had despatched in search of the Isles of the Blest and the herb of immortality. Hsu Fu led him through the city streets, where the inhabitants, weary of endless pleasure, sought to put an end to their existence by the Art of Death. Vainly they consumed globe fish sprinkled with soot and other poisonous food ‘whilst the flesh of mermaids and the life-giving

panacea of the old world were spurned with horror. It was considered a high compliment to say that anyone looked sick and on the brink of his grave.' Wasobioye endured the horrors of happiness, with many fruitless attempts at suicide, for twenty years, when he finally escaped to continue his travels in the marvellous lands of the Three Thousand Buddhist Worlds !

Of all men the rigid idealist is the most dangerous. He worships at the shrine of an impossible deity, since human perfection is nowhere attainable upon earth nor in any cloud-land of our imagination. His infallible system is invariably a theocracy—Church and State merged in one—with himself and his friends as high priests, regulating human conduct from the cradle to the grave. The worship of perfection is the worship of the thing accomplished, of that which is limited since it can go no farther. To dream of a more perfect state, to make one's tiny contribution towards a better world is incumbent upon all. But the difference between the artist-philosopher of the East and the idealist of the West lies in their conception of life's institutions as natural growths or artificial buildings similar to the hive with its cells. The one poet of the East appealing to Western Utopian or theologian desiring to impose his own particular panacea on his fellows is the Persian Omar :

' Ah love ! couldst thou and I with Fate conspire  
To grasp this sorry scheme of things entire,  
Would we not shatter it to bits, and then  
Remould it nearer to the heart's desire ? '

But the human institution, whether of Church or State, is no concrete thing built of bricks and

mortar, but a living organism, into which men have built themselves, their ideas of justice and freedom tempered by order, and their glowing ideals of fellowship and community with man and God. Those who desire to shatter to bits are the artisans and mechanics of large cities who have never studied growth, whose minds react to their immediate environment. The difference between theologian and Utopian is one of locality. Both desire 'the completion of the Community,' one in Heaven, and one on earth.

But with the Chinese, as Mr J. W. Mason points out, it is

'creativeness which is eternal, not the created thing, which is ephemeral ; and every new shade of meaning stimulates the idea of creativeness afresh. . . .

'China expresses her æsthetic longings not only in terms of art, poetry and other immobile forms, but also in all human relationships. She has made æstheticism her religion. The art of government in China calls to its service artists rather than artisans.'

And if it is true that creativeness alone is eternal, then it follows that the sole hope and claim of man to outlast the time-process in which he labours is through his creativeness. And it is here that we begin dimly to understand the Chinese idea of ancestor-worship

'as reverence for creativeness, for the continuing spirit of life which, through ancestry, has maintained itself from the commencement of being to the present time. Not what the ancestor has done,

but his ancestorship—not the created object, but creativeness—inspires the devotion.’

From the unconscious to the self-conscious, from the self-conscious to the God-conscious is the ascending scale. But the West has preferred to remain in the second or self-conscious stage. It has flattered and cajoled its Deity for no other purpose than this—that it may remain eternally self-conscious with the old earthly ties around it in His presence. But, according to the teaching of Eastern wisdom, there is no Paradise on earth or hereafter for the self-conscious. Not earthly surroundings but a state of mind makes of this life a heaven or hell. Humility and understanding lead to serenity which is the natural state of those who have attained to Paradise, not drugs of immortality, or asceticism.

‘Man,’ says Mr Laurence Binyon, ‘is lord of the world, but only because he has gone out into humbler existences than his own and has understood them, and returning to his own life, has found in that the supreme expression of the life which animates all things.’ And he is lord of both worlds when he has established a right relationship between himself and that which is other than self; and in merging with other lives he has become a creator and so claimed his inheritance to immortality. The condition of the immortals is one of endless serenity; that of self-consciousness is one of endless unrest. For the self-conscious man is acquisitive. He works to exact tribute from the world—of fame and applause, of wealth and position; not growth from within but accretion from without is the object of his pursuit. He looks round to compare him-

self with others, especially those who labour in the same field, and the result is envy and discontent and the desire to decry their work to his own advantage. This is the spirit of so much criticism in the West. Our wares are for sale, but the market is already overstocked. Therefore let us extol our own and those of our friends to the detriment of our rivals. In this we are but imitators ; one with the acquisitive Society of to-day :

‘ We imitate because we are caught in the panic of life, and imitation is our protective mimicry. We crave for possessions to shield us against our weakness and against fate, and smitten with the lust of sensation, we hurry to gratify it. But we only defeat our heart’s desire, for what sensation can vie with the glow and the strength that are in us, while we create ? In the one case we try to buttress our strength from the ebbing sensual world ; in the other, we draw into ourselves the strength of the everlasting. . . . Every sensual stimulus leaves us weakened and nearer to death. Every act of creative will makes us stronger and brings us nearer to immortal life.’

Yet we can only become creators when we have learnt to distinguish between the true self and the false, when we have annihilated the usurper that ‘ came between us and our peace.’ And when we have won this freedom for the creative will, how shall we set about the work of creation ? What does the word itself imply, and in what way does it differ from the ordinary routine of life and the daily task ? In *The Song of Life*, a little gem of ancient wisdom and beauty, based upon the teaching of the

Upanishads, Mr Charles Johnston has given the answer :

‘ We are to handle all the force and substance of our lives, holding nothing too gross or trivial ; to transform all, no longer guiding ourselves by hearsay or tradition, but working through the instant intuition of the Soul. For each of us there is a peculiar task or art or handicraft, something we can do with surpassing pleasure and power. The Soul is to work in us through that task first, writing its revelation in our work.’

Creation is not limited to works of art alone. It is the privilege and within the power of all to create. The time is at hand when machinery must shorten the working hours of mankind, and with the coming of the four-hour day comes the essential education for leisure for which the world has waited overlong ; when all men will ‘ become creative, and the work of each will be indispensable to all and rewarded by all.’ This is but the small, obscure beginning of a new age and vision of an earthly Paradise that broadens into the future and sets us adventuring through the haze of golden memories. For to go forward we must go back, and as the great poet and educationist of India, Rabindranath Tagore, has reminded us :

‘ The creative ideals of life necessary for giving expression to the fullness of humanity were developed centuries ago. And when to-day these suffer from some misfit as a result of constant expansion of knowledge and a variety of new experiences, we fail to adjust them into a comprehensive completeness.’



But these creative ideals came to their final flowering, not in India but through India to China, and through China to Japan. Their blossoms are turned towards the rising sun of life-fulfilment, not towards the dark Himalayan shadows of life-negation. And the lesson that we have yet to learn is that to attain Nirvana, Heaven, or any state of bliss hereafter, call it what you will, we cannot play leap-frog over the Kingdom of God on Earth. We are not here to speculate about our place in Paradise, but to aid in the work of Creation. Idle thought is idle dream, and there is no way of escape into immortality and rest through asceticism, no withdrawal into the cloisters of men or nature, through refusal to face life and adjust this 'constant expansion of knowledge and variety of new experiences . . . into a comprehensive completeness.'

Man made in the image of God is God limiting Himself in matter for a purpose of which we are increasingly aware when we submit ourselves to His will. Creative power is the Will of God seeking expression of self in matter. Creative thought is thought expressed in action and is concerned solely and exclusively with Here and Now. Knowledge and experience are wise counsellors. But the time comes when we must set aside the counsels of deliberation, and act only through the urge from within. Here is the parting of the ways when the false self developed by accretion from without is dissolved, and the true self of divine growth and spiritual adventure takes its place. The moment of self-losing is also the moment of self-finding. It is the supreme moment when the self of illusion, and therefore of misery, is lost, when we find our-

selves no longer detached and without but adjusted and within, when we realize that God is Self. All revelation brings release from one bondage after another, from sloth, from ignorance, from impatience (which is perhaps the prevailing evil of an age for ever seeking short cuts to happiness), and lastly from fear. And since in life as we know it all is change, all is becoming, there can be no tarrying for us in any earthly Paradise. The Isles of the Blest have arisen, not as idle dreams but as quiet havens for re-creation where all aspirations towards a fuller and nobler life on earth can be renewed and revitalized for a passing hour. And we shall watch them transferred from the shadowy receding waters of myth to the frail security of silk and the certain immortality of song. For all that is enduring of man's dreams in the dawn of time belongs to the realm of art, and this is the real Island of the Blest and the kingdom of man's re-creation. In the beginning of the human race was myth, and the spirit of man brooded over the waters of life. And the beginning of art, as Mr Firestone has pointed out in his fascinating book, *The Coasts of Illusion*, 'was magic, alike in the chants of rainmakers, the cave paintings of the Dordogne, and the sculptures of Egypt; and magic is its end. . . . And while he builds the pleasant marvels of his yesterdays into habitations of fancy, he will rear other structures of the like insubstantial stuff and deem them the abiding-places of reality.'

For us reality lies in creation alone, for in creation we are oblivious to all else, the lapse of time, the flight of youth, the weariness of age and the mystery that brims beyond our ken. The service of the

Creator by man through his creative freedom and will to create is all that matters. As for the life hereafter, the words of St Paul to the Corinthians are the bridge that links the Christianity of the West with the Nirvana of Buddha and the Tao of Lao Tzŭ.<sup>1</sup>

As the generations pass they travel lighter. No longer do we label our neighbour's trunk 'Passenger to Hell' or 'Per s.s. Rome for Paradise.' Mostly we have no trunks to label. The pretty pictures of reality in the world to come, the thrones and powers and angels and cherubim, the jewelled dreams of the Apocalypse have all gone, jettisoned in moving stream and deeper channels of human thought. For we are beginning to learn that 'it is not given to man to envisage reality. His is the greater gift to brood over Chaos and shape it as he will.'

<sup>1</sup> See p. 64.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE FELLOWSHIP OF LIFE

CHINESE religion has two aspects—Nature-worship and ancestor-worship, the Tao of Man, and the Tao of Earth. Both are related through the Tao of Heaven from which they derive, and the Tao of Heaven is the Cosmic Power which generates and controls all things human and earthly. But we must be careful to distinguish between Heaven, conceived of as the over-arching sky with its distribution of warmth and sunlight and rain, its procession of the four seasons, and the Tao of Heaven which is spiritual essence working through matter. ‘These two things,’ says Lao Tzŭ, ‘the spiritual and the material, though we call them by different names, in their origin are one and the same. This sameness is a mystery—the mystery of mysteries. It is the gateway of spirituality.’ There are two sides to the eternal Tao—that of the life-principle which cannot be named or defined, and that which can be named as the Mother of all things, *i.e.* the manifestation of life. Commenting on the first chapter of the *Tao Teh King*, Dr Isabella Mears points out that

‘the two are complementary. One is not praised at the expense of the other, one cannot be without the other ; in life we must take knowledge of both. To be busied with outer things, having no thought of the inner, can only bring disaster. To be busied

with Inner Life without regard to the Outer is impossible.'

This sameness of origin between the spiritual and the material is the very basis of Taoist philosophy. And the inevitable goal of Taoism is a Unity where the two are One, and so in its most ancient literature we find this central thought expressed, *Yin Yang* 'Hun' *ho*, which may be rendered, 'the forms of duality must be blended in Unity.' The *Yin*, which is the female principle, 'is assimilated with the Earth, which is cold and dark, and the *Yang* with Heaven, which is warm and luminous.'

Broadly speaking, we may say that the Taoism of Confucius and Lao Tzŭ has a common stem but that each branches off in a different direction. The Tao of Confucius is principally concerned with the conduct of man in his relation to his fellow-men, through the Family, Society, and the Race. That of Lao Tzŭ seeks to co-ordinate the Tao of man with the Tao of Heaven and of Earth. Yet even Confucius admits that man is dual-souled in the following remarkable passage quoted by Morgan de Groot from the *Li yun*, which relates that :

'Tsai Ngo said, "I have heard the words *Kwei* and *Shen*, but I do not know their meaning"; and that Confucius thereupon said to him, "The *Khi* or *breath* is the full manifestation of the *shen*, and the *p'oh* is the full manifestation of the *Kwei*; the union of the *Kwei* with the *shen* is the highest of all doctrines. Living beings must all die, and the soul which must then return to earth is that which is called *Kwei*. But while the bones and the flesh moulder in the ground and imperceptibly become the earth of the fields, the *Khi* or *breath* departs to move on high as a shining light."'

This mysterious union of the female *Kwei* with the male *shen* is common to many lands through the symbol of the Swastika, but nowhere has it been studied more deeply than in the ancient Chinese classics. In their union death and life embrace and mingle, and both are resolved in a state of immortality which is represented in Christianity by the resurrection where 'they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven.' This is also confirmed to a remarkable extent by the following passage from the Apocrypha New Testament, quoted by Claude Bragdon<sup>1</sup>: 'For the Lord himself, having been asked by someone when his Kingdom should come, said, When the two shall be one, and the outside as the inside, and the male with the female.'

Taoism and Confucianism acted and reacted so closely upon one another that it is almost possible to say of some great official, 'He was a Confucian in his hours of work, and a Taoist in his leisure.' And when, later on, the moon of Buddhism glided over the Himalayas he became a Buddhist in the hours of rest and contemplation. Ultimately all that was essential in Taoism was absorbed in Buddhism, which thus united in itself the artistic and creative aspect of leisure with the religious and contemplative of rest. But for centuries there has been a constant struggle between the Southern or idealist type of mind, and the Northern, or practical. So long as the balance between the two was maintained, China flourished. But when in A.D. 1421 the Capital was transferred by the Mings from Nanking to Peking and the Northern or Confucian party finally triumphed, decay set in. The brilliance of

<sup>1</sup> *Old Lamps for New.*

the Manchu Court under two great emperors K'ang Hsi and Ch'ien Lung between A.D. 1662 and 1796 is merely the brief glamour of those two late summers in autumn before winter sets in.

In ancient China, long before the spirit of adventure in commerce had entered the land, a pastoral and nomadic people settled down to cultivate the soil. Millet and rice and maize were the principal crops according to *The Odes of Confucius* :

‘ With radiant joy each husbandman surveys  
The millet stored, the rice crop and the maize.’

The cult of the plough has been a religious cult from time immemorial, and the festival of agriculture is held at the beginning of the spring equinox, when the ‘ spring ox,’ decorated with ribbons, is led in procession carrying on its back a figure which represents the coming year. The Yin of Earth yielding to the Yang of Heaven produces all things in due season, and these productions of the Yin and Yang are yielded in their turn to man who unites within himself the principles of both. Even the natural phenomena respond to his requirements, for ‘ the rising of wind, the gathering of clouds—all are *necessities* ; the rolling of thunder, and the fall of rain alike *must be*.’ Yet, though man is dependent on Nature for maintenance, as a microcosm of the Universal soul, in other words, as one made in the image of God, the man who recognizes the divinity within himself becomes a partner with Him in the adventure of Creation, ‘ a co-worker in the divine transformation.’ This process of birth and rebirth is called *Yih* or *change*, giving its name to China’s most ancient classic, the *Yih King*. The power of

Tao in man is expressed by the philosopher Huai-Nan Tzū in the following remarkable passage :

‘ Those whose action is inaction are in harmony with Tao ; those whose speech is inaction have a full comprehension of virtue ; those who are tranquil and content, devoid of conceit, are in possession of Harmony. Although there be a myriad diversities (of affairs affecting them) all will be in accordance with their dispositions. The spirits of such men may find a home in the tip of an autumn hair or pervade the Universe in its entirety. Their virtue moulds Heaven and Earth, and harmonizes the Yin and the Yang ; it divides the Four Seasons from each other, and brings the Five Elements into accord. Its benign and gentle breath cherishes all things, both inanimate and alive ; it enriches vegetation with moisture and permeates stones and metals . . . ’

No greater claim for man has ever been made than this—that through spontaneous action from within he is able to collaborate in the increasing purpose of God, acting in harmony with the spontaneity of Nature without him. For Huai-Nan Tzū has been careful to define what is meant by ‘ inaction.’ It is not, as some scholars seem to think, ‘ doing nothing.’ It is rather the doctrine of the right opportunity, of acting on the inevitable hour, of striking the timely note that passes into harmony with others and produces a perfect chord. ‘ *Those who are called inactive are such as do not attempt to force things into premature action.*’

Thus they act from no selfish motive, but rather in complete absence of motive, and therefore—as Beal has rendered the Chinese term *Wu Wei*—in



'absence of self'; or, as Stanislas Julien puts it, 'they practise virtue naturally.' Buddhism confirms this definition of inaction in the first of the *Forty-two sections*, where Buddha says that 'he is rightly called a Shaman who is able to exhibit in his conduct this absence of self.'

There is another aspect of Wu Wei which needs consideration—that of 'guarding the vitality.' Lao Tzŭ, says Professor Giles, 'urged his fellow-mortals to guard their vitality by entering into harmony with their environment.' By continual action from a variety of selfish motives the vitality is impaired. In the pursuit of fame and wealth and pleasure we become exhausted. The normal state of man is one of corresponding harmony with man and with Nature. Yet 'only by moderation can there be an early return to man's normal state. This early return is the same as a great storage of virtue. With a great storage of virtue there is naught which may not be achieved.' Man is of Nature, a natural product of the Earth, not a supernatural being, nor a God in exile. Yet God who is the beginning is also the ultimate end. 'He is manifested in the laws of Nature. He is the hidden spring.'

This being the conclusion of the Taoist philosophy, it is small wonder if its followers sought for Him in the laws of Nature, if the early sages of The Way were anchorites among the hills and forests, and solitary observers of natural phenomena. Inevitably they followed the precession of the equinoxes, the trail of the four seasons, and the assemblage of the constellations. Gradually, as time went on, two separate schools of nature-worship were evolved; Man the eternal artist and

creator parted company with Man the eternal primitive, the slave of fear and superstition. When Chuang Tzū, as Giles points out, added to the guarded vitality of Lao Tzū a motive 'to pass into the realm of the Infinite and make one's final rest therein,' only a step remained towards the counterfeiter's den and the quack doctor's laboratory where the coin of a spurious immortality was issued and 'the elixir of life' was brewed. The cleavage in the doctrine of Tao as laid down by Lao Tzū began to appear in the 4th century B.C. in the writings of Lieh Tzū and his later contemporary Chuang Tzū. This is most noticeable in the latter's conception of the attainment of immortality through inaction :

'Vitality which the Tao of the highest order confers is deepest mysteriousness and darkest darkness ; its ultimate point is unconsciousness and silence. Be without seeing, without hearing ; envelop your own soul in stillness, and your body will spontaneously remain in the correct path ; be still and you are sure to become pure ; if you do not subject your body to toil, you do not agitate your vitality, and you may live for ever. If your eyes see nothing and your ears hear nothing, then your mind (or heart) will not be conscious of anything, your *shen* will preserve your body, and your body will live for ever.'

Longevity has always been a passion with the Chinese race. To become venerable is to become an object of regard and even of reverence. Yet this desire to live on was only to be achieved through the dispassion of complete quiescence and inactivity. And the way of achievement was always the way of the anchorite living remote from humanity and in

supposed harmony with Nature. This type of anchorite was essentially an ascetic, one who lived by self-mortification, even as the Indian fakir and the Christian fanatic of the desert. Not for him the activity of growth, the pulsing of the sap, the riot and profusion of a life whose object is to bear fruit and scatter seed before it vanish. For him there were but two seasons—the late autumn of decay and the winter of death in life.

There is, however, another side of Taoism in its relation to Nature which has met with little consideration at the hands of scholars. It begins long before the birth of Lao Tzŭ, at a time when history was emerging from the ocean of myth. It is based on harmony with natural law and is the result of the mingling of rational observation with spiritual intuition. The facts and phenomena of Nature were noted and set down. From primitive times man has had to live in conformity with the alternations of the four seasons and the prevailing climatic conditions. His dress, diet, and habitation were profoundly influenced by them. Gradually he came to realize that the workings of Nature were due to certain laws to which even he had to adapt himself. The Chinese mind is not easy to understand, since in all the ancient writings, including the Confucian classics, a sane rationalism, a profound sense of order, and a subtle æsthetic appreciation will be found side by side with elements of gross superstition, divination, geomancy, and the cult of spirits both good and evil. Chuang Tzŭ is an outstanding example of this two-fold mind ; his book contains seeds of vitality which have blossomed and borne fruit in art and literature, and

germs of superstition which flourish like rank vegetation in the degenerate Taoism of a later period. Yet Taoism in its essence is a blending of science and mysticism, of rationalism and intuition both necessary and complementary to each other. Nowhere has this relationship been better defined than in Havelock Ellis's inspiring chapter in *The Dance of Life*, called 'The Art of Religion' :

' If, indeed, by " science " we mean the organization of an intellectual relationship to the world we live in adequate to give us some degree of power over that world, and if by " mysticism " we mean the joyful organization of an emotional relationship to the world conceived as a whole, the opposition which we usually assume to exist between them is of comparatively modern origin.'

The first step taken by the disciple of the Way or Art of Life was to put himself right with Nature and to enter into harmony with the Cosmic Law. It matters little to us if at this early stage of development he went a step too far in his endeavour to adjust his rational and conscious self with the Non-Self without him, and, separating from the community of his fellow-beings, became an anchorite. His influence was never withdrawn from the world of human affairs. The hermitages of his kind were invariably placed in surroundings of great natural charm and were known as *tsing-shu* or 'cottages for spirituality.' Men resorted to him eagerly—travellers, pilgrims, disciples. This was a time when to forsake the world was to draw the world after you, attracted by the inward light that shone from afar. Not the hermit's hut of boughs thatched with grass, but the hermit himself was the shrine. The

‘cottage for spirituality’ was only so called because it contained the shrine of light therein. This was the beginning of pilgrimage and spiritual adventure.

The anchorite of Nature did not seek to draw others after him, yet his happiness was communicable, and the rumour of his revelation spread like a traveller’s tale from street to street in the cities and haunts of men. When we first meet him, in *The Odes of Confucius*, two thousand years B.C., he is alone, and let alone. Some strayed reveller from the feasts of human fellowship has both seen and heard him proclaiming the sovereignty of the sun in the valley of laggard shadows, or challenging the clouds along a moon-worn mountain trail. A passing envy and admiration of his buoyant freedom and careless security has impelled him to echo the anchorite’s song with variations of his own ; a wanderer’s loitering hour has survived Tyre and Nineveh and Babylon, his solitary track remembered, their crowded thoroughfares forgotten. Here, by the grace of Confucius, collector and transmitter of ancient ballads, is the happy man :

‘ He has perched in the valley with pines overgrown,  
This fellow so stout and so merry and free ;  
He sleeps and he talks and he wanders alone,  
And none are so true to their pleasures as he.

‘ He has builded his hut in the bend of the mound,  
This fellow so fine with his affluent air ;  
He wakes and he sings with no neighbour around.  
And whatever betide him his home will be there.

‘ He dwells on a height amid cloudland and rain,  
This fellow so grand whom the world blunders by ;  
He slumbers alone, wakes, and slumbers again,  
And his secrets are safe in that valley of Wei.’

In a flash his one secret which matters to us is revealed. He has established himself in harmony with the Cosmic Law. He is one with the conquering activities of Heaven, of the sun and the wind and rain, and the quiescence of the surrendering earth. Through his unity with them their unity is achieved in him. That is his rest. In his re-creative capacity the anchorite of Nature belongs to the Yin or female order yielding to Nature's moods to reproduce them within himself. That is his quiescence. Yet in all his acts of re-creation he is of the Yang or masculine order. His work is a living thing capable of stirring, stimulating and engendering new life in others. Through it the artist survives, as woman survives through the son she has given to the world, to stir the emotion, stimulate the thought and engender new forms of creation in the receptive minds of the generations to come. That is his activity. The Chinese have compared the receptive mind to a mirror which reflects all things. But the mirror has no depth and retains nothing ; it is a mere object of utility enabling us to see ourselves.

Far truer is the comparison of the Chinese poet to clear water which both receives and reflects, which is a source of life in itself and a giver of fertility to the lands it passes through. Beauty and utility are both contained in a flowing stream. But the receptive mind of the artist is no mere passive instrument ; it is endowed with a sense that many possess and few cultivate—the sense of awareness, greater than the sense of discrimination, since it touches the essentials of things.

Keats possessed this sense beyond all the poets

of the Western world, and the result is slowly being realized long after his death. Those who read his poems should use his immortal letters as commentary ; as a revelation of all that goes to the making of great poetry they are unique ! Not 'stopping at home among books, even though I should reach Homer,' Keats went to Nature as the direct source of inspiration. A writer in *The Times Literary Supplement* quotes that most pregnant passage in which the poet describes his impression of the waterfalls at Ambleside :

'What astonishes me more than anything is the tone, the colouring, the slate, the stone, the moss, the rock-weed ; or, if I may say so, the intellect, the countenance of such places. The space, the magnitude of mountains and waterfalls are well imagined before one sees them ; but this countenance or intellectual tone must surpass every imagination and defy any remembrance. I shall learn poetry here and shall henceforth write more than ever, for the abstract endeavour of being able to add a mite to that mass of beauty which is harvested from these grand materials, by the finest spirits, and put into etherial existence for the relish of one's fellows. I cannot think with Hazlitt that these scenes make man little. I never forgot my stature so completely—I live in the eye ; and my imagination, surpassed, is at rest.'

Commenting on this passage, *The Times* reviewer, in a most illuminating and constructive criticism, re-creates for us the poet's idea of beauty which lies at the very centre of his art and inspiration :

'One does not wonder that Keats found it hard to fit a name to the essential beauty of which he

has so distinct and overpowering a sensation : even the few philosophers who have been aware of its existence have sought painfully for a word. . . . Keats himself was later to use the admirable word "identity" for it. It is the individual and infeasible uniqueness of the object ; "the being what it is" of Aristotle's phrase. With this, in Keats's view, the poet was supremely concerned ; by his power to distinguish and apprehend and be receptive to this "identity" he is a poet.'

The difference between Keats and Hazlitt is this—that in the face of overwhelming beauty and grandeur Hazlitt was still Hazlitt, measuring the stature of his human personality against the vastness of Nature's identity, whereas Keats, possessing the Taoist mind, made of that mind a vacuum into which this composite image, of Ambleside, of rocks and water, mountains and waterfalls, flowed. Hazlitt, the masculine symbol, failed to dominate and therefore lost heart ; the waters mirrored back a dwarf ; Keats, the feminine symbol of re-creative art, forgot his stature so completely that he became Vision, receiving all things through the organ of vision—'I live in the eye.' *Æstheticism* comes before art, the receptive faculty before the re-creative. To give life to the world we must first surrender to life, yield to conquer. The first Artist was not man but the Supreme Architect of the Universe, the Great Musician whom astronomers and mathematicians have assembled to praise in the columns of the *London Times*. Neither was man his first audience but, æons before him, the song-bird of some primal dawn. Poetry was the first response of life to every act and every handiwork of God. Centuries before



Israel and the Psalms of David we may listen to the supplication of a nameless Egyptian poet asking, not for creative power that he may challenge the Creator, but for the æsthetic faculty of right appreciation which is the link between religion and art : ' O God my Lord, who hast made me, and formed me, give me an eye to see and an ear to hear thy glories.' And the God whom he addresses is no personal God, made in man's image, nor the deity of an institutional religion enshrined in stone. For—

' He is not seen ; he hath neither minister nor offerings ; he is not worshipped in temples ; his dwelling is not known. No shrine of his hath painted images. There is no habitation which may hold him. Unknown is his name in heaven, and his form is not manifested, for every image of him is in vain.'

In other words, He is the nameless Tao—for ' the Tao which can be expressed in words is not the eternal Tao ; the name which can be uttered is not the eternal name '—whose home is in the Universe, not in any dwelling made by human hands. And in seeking Him we can only come nearer to Him when we are prepared, like Him, to make our home in the Universe, leaving the comfortable homesteads of nationality and creed and class and party behind us. Emile Hovelague, with the subtle delicacy of a Frenchman, has defined the undefinable as far as the limitations of human thought and speech will allow :

' And first, may not the Tao then be the spiritual principle of all things, without form and substance,

infinite, one, identical in the universe and in the spirit of man, for the universe is one, and all is spirit, spirit and matter are identical ; and which, consequently, cannot be expressed by limited phenomena, nor by speech? For it is ineffable and incommunicable by any way which is not its Way.

‘ It is the principle of all energy, yet energy is not it, but merely one of its manifestations. It is the eternal principle of all life, but no life can express it, and all bodies, all material forms, are but its changing momentary raiment.’

With this illuminating and happy suggestion, for it makes no further claim upon us, we may start with the dawn of man’s pilgrimage to God in His secret places. The anchorite of eternal beauty and transience carries with him the tribute of his Humanity to the shrine of Nature. The first chords of harmony, whether in *The Odes of Confucius* or the Vedic hymns of the Rishis, are struck when the voices of men and gods, who are all identical with Brahm, are blended together. But, as Emile Hovelague has reminded us :

‘ It is only in solitude that these voices of Nature and of Humanity can be heard. It is only in communion with himself that man becomes conscious of that secret life, which is his true life, and the life of things : action leaves him no time and gives him no opportunity to share in it ; deafened by the noises of that other empty life, which is that of men absorbed in the pursuit of enjoyment, of distraction, of riches, of material ends, led astray from Wisdom by his vain belief in science, he cannot hear these voices, for they only speak in silence, and in solitude, at their appointed times. . . .’

Man seeks Nature for two reasons. As Dr Barbour has pointed out in *Sin and the New Psychology*: 'Since man first became man, it has been his desire to bring his own soul into harmony with the reality behind the universe.' That is the religious quest of man. He aspires to realize himself by adjustment to the reality without him and so live and feel and experience all things from within. He is no longer 'an atom at random in space,' but with his spiritual energy set in motion he 'blends with all things into one.' Thus the result of religion is self-realization. But art, though it is based on religion, has a different goal in view. The artist seeks diversity and through him new worlds are born.

Dr Ralph Sockman in a recent book, *Morals of To-morrow*, has approached the Taoist interpretation of human art, which is the Valley Spirit drawing radiations of the distant Spheres, the veils of dawn and sunset, and the liberating rains down to itself: '*The distinguishing mark of the genuine artist is that he is trying to express something through himself rather than trying to express himself through something . . . . Beethoven listening to unheard music was concerned to express not himself but it.*' Yet the music heard in the soul of Beethoven can never be heard by us as Beethoven heard it. When we listen to his quartet in B flat, *op.* 131, we are listening to something which has developed from utter simplicity of theme through vast complexity of texture into a new world of harmony. The ear of inspiration, which in this case is the organ of reception, takes in nothing but a simple theme. All else is worked out in detail afterwards. So we may go beyond Dr Sockman's

definition and say that the artist does not merely express something *through* himself but something *of* himself as well ; that he is no mere recorder and transmitter of impressions ; that all art is the outcome of the temporary merging of identities, the union of the Yin and the Yang. 'But for these emotions, I should not be. But for me, they would have no scope,' says Chuang Tzû.

In art, as in everything else, the sense of Personality or non-Personality divides East from West,

'and that is why the superiority of Oriental art lies in the expression of profound metaphysical and religious sentiments, in the representation of aspects of Nature and in the art of landscape ; the superiority of ours above all in human drama ; the representation of individual life, concrete and personal, in scientific and psychological analysis rather than in intuitive synthesis and vision.'

This valley of Wei, with its happy man 'whose secrets are safe,' is symbolical of the intimate union between Man and Nature in the Far East. Other valleys in years to come will possess their lowly 'Anglers of the Mists and Waters.' As we wander through the twilight of history we may see, from time to time, the banners and lanterns of emissaries from some ghostly Court of Tang or Sung threading the mountain passes to tempt a ragged anchorite with the portfolio of Prime Minister. And the answer is always the same. It is embodied in the song of Chang Chih-Ho of the 8th century. It rolls back along the mountain-pass, reverberates among the rocks, and sweeping the curtains of intrigue aside, rattles the political chessmen in the imperial palace :

‘ The Lady Moon is my lover ;  
My friends are the oceans four ;  
The heavens have roofed me over,  
And the Dawn is my golden door.

‘ I would liefer follow the condor,  
Or the sea-gull soaring from ken,  
Than bury my godhead yonder  
In the dust of the whirl of men.’

Bearing in mind the predominant sense of personality in the West, we shall not be surprised to find that landscape is invariably treated ‘ as an accessory to human life and a background to human events.’ The attitude of the average European towards Nature has been summarized by the Russian novelist Tchekov in *Ariadne* :

‘ Lubkov was fond of Nature, but he regarded it as something long familiar and at the same time, in reality, infinitely beneath himself and created for his pleasure. He would sometimes stand still before some magnificent landscape and say, “ It would be nice to have tea here.” ’

Even a poet like the late Lord de Tabley, a nineteenth-century anchorite, is constrained to adopt a tone of patronage which would be unthinkable to the Chinese and alien to the spirit of their poetry :

‘ I have not blinded nature from my heart,  
Refusing to the common fields and clouds  
Their excellence of glory. Not in vain  
For me the process of the months resumed  
The cyclic renovation of their powers ;  
And every flower that feeds on English air  
In wilding pomp is my familiar friend.’

Yet de Tabley comes close to their recognition of the ancient and eternal reign of Cosmic Law when he proclaims in the exquisite 'Lament for Adonis' that

'Nature is greater than the grief of gods,  
And Pan prevails, while dynasties in Heaven  
Rule out their little æons and resign  
The thunder and the throne to younger hands.'

In the art and poetry of the Far East we are aware, however, of a still closer intimacy with the natural world than de Tabley or even Wordsworth can lay claim to. The poets are 'the dream companions of the moon,' they are 'the elder brothers of a thousand flowers.' Li Po proclaims his friendship with the Ching-ting Peak,—

'Flocks of birds have flown high and away ;  
A solitary drift of cloud, too, has gone, wandering on.  
And I sit alone with the Ching-ting Peak, towering beyond.  
We never grow tired of each other, the mountain and I.'

'How absurd,' exclaims the average Westerner, 'to imagine that men and mountain-peaks can fraternize !' Or if he felt any emotion at all in the presence of Mt. Blanc, it would be one of fear and helplessness. He would be inclined to think with Hazlitt 'that these scenes make man little.' But before the Chinese poet entered into any relationship with any part or portion of the Universe, whether flower or mountain-peak, he had first to adjust himself to the reality without him, 'and so be able to live and feel and experience all things from within.' It was not Li Po the worldling and drunkard, but Li Po the cosmic man who, conscious of his own identity, was able to apprehend

the identity in an object so apparently remote from human life.

In one of his shorter poems called 'Wherefore,' Walt Whitman speaks of the questions of life and self endlessly recurring,

' Of the poor results of all—of the plodding and sordid crowds  
I see around me ;  
Of the empty and useless years of the rest—with the rest me  
intertwined ;  
The question, O me ! so sad, recurring—What good amid  
these, O me, O life ? '

Then lets his inward self answer his outward self, summing up the wherefore in two eventful lines—

' That you are here—that life exists, and identity ;  
That the powerful play goes on, and you will contribute a  
verse.'

To recognize that identity exists is to recognize ' the individual and indefeasible uniqueness of the *living* object.' Reverence for life, joy in life, communion with life—that is the answer of the free soul to the mind revolving like a squirrel in its cage. And not human life alone—that is the satisfaction of the type-conscious ape—but life in all its aspects and all its types. If we read on we shall see in Whitman's ' Song at Sunset '

' How the water sports and sings ! (Surely it is alive !)  
How the trees rise and stand up—with strong trunks—with  
branches and leaves !  
Surely there is something more in each of the trees—some  
living soul.'

So he enters into the Fellowship of Life through the converging harmonies of time and space, and

drifting with the surge liberates his song for those who care and dare to follow :

' O amazement of things ! even the least particle !

O spirituality of things !

O strain musical, flowing through ages and continents—  
now reaching me and America !

I take your strong chords—I intersperse them, and cheer-  
fully pass them forward.'

Only one who has found himself, has touched his own identity with reverent hands, can hear and acknowledge the 'strain musical' that flows eternally from the past into the future. For as Kamo No Chōmei, the Buddhist recluse of the 12th century, has written, 'the three realms of existence—past, present, and future—depend on the soul alone.' Another Japanese mystic, Yoshida Kenko, two hundred years later said that 'people are too busy with the new to trouble themselves with the old,' and added, 'It is a glimpse into the hearts of men.' And Po Chu-i in *The Harper of Chao* laments—

' Alas, alas that the ears of common men

Should love the modern and not love the old.

Thus it is that the harp in the green window

Day by day is covered deeper with dust.'

Yet we do not praise the old—*laudatores temporis acti*—simply because it is old, but because it is eternal. That is why the anchorites of Nature left the fleeting, vanishing personalities of their time, the love that turns to lust, the friendship that proves false or ephemeral, and formed enduring ties among the mountains and woodlands and valleys that never betrayed them. That is why these cosmic friendships, so strange and unintelligible to those who have never shed their humanity



upon the mountain-height, will last so long as there are souls to understand the vast affinities which belong to the Fellowship of Life.

A critic of the author's *Feast of Lanterns* once found that 'something infinitely old is suggested by these slender pictures of trees, of fruit, of flower or of mountain and water.' There is a half-reproach implied in this criticism as who should say, why weary us with the pathos of ancient sunlight, or the glamour of Spring a thousand years ago? And yet these slender pictures will suggest not merely that which is infinitely old, but also that which is eternally young. The heart has a gallery of its own on which, at long intervals, are scrolled the memories of delectable days and nights unchilled by the grey touch of dawn, unbroken by the *réveillé* of human affairs.

Youth paints and forgets ; age walks in the silent gallery remembering. Yet memory is nothing more than a pleasant retreat, an inviolable shelter for the heart grown old. On these walls are but the images of children born to the immortal hour when lover and beloved, painter and flower, poet and moonrise attained union and through re-creation achieved rebirth. The children of the immortals can never abide in the exclusive and fading memory of the human heart but in the world-remembrance which is common to the human race. That is the meaning of Yuan Mei's strange last message to his friend :

' Surely there sings no lighter heart than mine beneath the  
sky,  
And now, companion of my nights of long moon-dreams,  
Good-bye !

For mine is the silver Dragon Car  
That hovers beyond the Rainbow Dome,  
And it's O to be galloping, galloping home  
Where my dream-born children are.'

Home, for him, is neither here nor there, but wherever there is a window set wide, wherever there is a crevice for a moonbeam to slip through. Home for him is where his children are, haunting the hearts of men. For their sake alone he gains a rarer privilege, a more sacred intimacy than husband or wife can ever know. He is the world-guest and the boon companion of the generations to come. Through his works, which are his children, he survives on earth or lingers a while before he shares the common oblivion. Whether he will outlast his day depends on whether he was true to himself and his subject, whether the union was absolute or only ephemeral. All else is but the shadow of a cloud passing over water. It was here—it is gone.

Yuan Mei was a gardener, the small gardener of a limited landscape. He loved Nature better than he could interpret her, yet, in the end, the Dragon Car that hovers beyond the Palace of the Moon came down for him, and now he dwells in the company of the Immortals. Yet still we may walk with him or with others in greater and more spacious gardens, but they are not, and never will be, an inheritance for idle years. They are just the dream-material of our own creations, from which we take and transplant here and there a flower. Life for each one of us is not a garden made by God or man but a wilderness with the potentialities of a thousand gardens latent in a virgin soil. What if there

were neither garden nor Paradise on earth in the beginning, but the soul of the Creator sent a dream among His images bidding them look backward to look forward, 'dream to wake' ! And in dealing with the very spirit of Chinese nature-worship, remember this—that there is no revelation of the supernatural in the art that was born to religion. To these anchorites of ancient beauty, these mystics of woodland and mountain and flowing stream, every hill was Mount Sinai, every grove and garden was Paradise where God walked in the cool of the day. And they have bequeathed to future ages no tables of stone and engraved commandments, but a radiance from the revelation of days and nights ; they have left us the myriad commandments of the stars to 'live self-poised nor pine with noting all the fever of some differing soul' ; they have devised to us the psalms of the wind and waterfall, the sacred scroll of man's communion with Nature ; the Old Testament of Night, and the New of Dawn, and all things infinitely old—eternally young.

## CHAPTER VII

### CHINA'S GOLDEN AGE

#### THE T'ANG DYNASTY (618-905)

THERE are two aspects to national history, even as there are two to the ordered human soul—the purposeful and the incidental. The purpose of a nation is rarely self-conscious at the beginning, but it breaks into self-consciousness with the flowering of Empire. To be conscious of self, conscious of mission, conscious of superiority, is to allow ‘the inward standard to manifest itself without.’ It is the end in sight ; but the purpose of a nation through all its phases, its greatness, its mission, its superiority, are the lawful materials of the historian. If he possess the one essential qualification beyond book-learning and research—that of historical imagination—he can re-create out of these broken scraps of machinery, these shards from the dust-heaps of oblivion, something of the methods of government and social life of Empires whose sun will never rise again. And all that is incidental, the rise and wane of dynasties, the tramp of legions, conquest and annexation, the ebb and flow of barbarians across the frontier, will be treated as incidental and only shown in so far as it stimulates or weakens and diverts the national purpose.

‘Chinese history,’ says Bertrand Russell, in *The Problem of China*, ‘consists of a series of dynasties,

each strong at first and weak afterwards, each gradually losing control over subordinates, each followed by a period of anarchy . . . and ultimately succeeded by a new dynasty which temporarily establishes a strong central Government.'

We should, however, also remember that the history of a great dynasty is the history of the impetus given in the first place by its founder. Afterwards there may come a fresh impetus from which the Empire gathers new strength and acquires new sources of inspiration, but the fountain-head is invariably the Emperor. He is the Father of his people. This is not to say that the Emperor was necessarily a great and original genius, a personality bigger than any of his subjects. What, then, was the secret of his influence on the national destiny? It lay, in our opinion, in his choice of ancestors.

The lower part of man inherits, the spiritual part adopts, and the ancestors of the human soul are those of adoption. The founder of the T'ang dynasty had the exemplars of 2,500 years to choose from, and he chose with honour. This T'ai Tsung was in reality the second of his line ; but it was his military genius that brought his father to the throne in A.D. 618, and when Kao Tsu allowed the reins of government to slip they were caught in the strong hands of his second son. Thenceforth, T'ai Tsung drove on to his appointed goal—the consolidation of China. He had no less than eleven rivals in eleven independent and hostile states, and one by one he subdued them all. Who, then, were his ancestors by adoption, and what influences from the past were brought to bear upon the moulding of his character?

In the first place, as a Chinese Emperor, and therefore loyal to tradition, he would take from tradition the legendary figures of Yao and Shun, the first Emperors of his race. Of them it need only be said that they embodied all that the nation looked for in kingcraft and statesmanship. Yao was the mouthpiece of his people. 'Every one had access to his Court either to offer a suggestion or make a criticism.' Shun was a patriarch of the Jacob type, receiving both Leah and Rachel from his father-in-law, Yao. It is interesting to note that at this period, 2200 B.C., there was a minister of education of Cabinet rank, with wider powers than any similar official possesses to-day. Yet neither we nor T'ai Tsung would have known much of Yao and Shun had it not been for Confucius. In 501 B.C., at the age of fifty, Confucius began his chequered career as a public official ; but only at the end of it, a broken, harassed, and disappointed man, did he settle down to edit the famous classics which are known to this day as his. No one can treat of any portion of Chinese history without referring to his outlook on Government and public affairs. More especially are we concerned with his attitude towards the rulers of his day. Chi K'ang Tzû asked by what means he might cause his people to be respectful and loyal, and encourage them in the path of virtue. Confucius replied : 'Conduct yourself towards them with dignity, and you will earn their respect ; be a good son and a kind prince, and you will find them loyal ; promote the deserving and instruct those who fall short, and they will be encouraged to follow the path of virtue.' The same prince asked for advice on the

subject of government. Confucius answered, 'To govern is to keep straight. If you, sir, lead the people straight, which of your subjects will venture to fall out of line?' Again he says, 'The virtue of the prince is like unto wind; that of the people like unto grass. For it is the nature of grass to bend when the wind blows upon it.'

In all these answers we see the sovereign held up as the pattern and example of his people. From the point of view of Chinese paternalism, it was the duty of the head of the family when things went wrong in the family circle to examine himself and so find out where the primary cause lay, and this applied specially to the ruler, who was, beyond all else, the Father of his people. Confucius held with many modern thinkers that the material prosperity of the people came before their education. It was of little use to feed the brain when the stomach was empty. Jan Yu said, 'Now that the people are so abundant, what is the next thing to be done?' 'Prosper them,' said Confucius. 'And having prospered them, what then?' 'Teach them,' was the reply.

At the very centre of Confucianism lies the doctrine of adjustment. The Emperor adjusts himself to the requirements of his great ministers; they in turn to the provincial governors; they to the local magistrates; and so on down the scale of social order. This adjustment may be described as the harmony of one human sphere of influence in its relation to another. The Master taught with music and ceremonies. For him music was the expression of a common brotherhood of humanity through feelings which never change and all possess

—through joy and sorrow, delight, fear and exaltation. ‘Ceremonies,’ said Confucius, ‘distinguish the things in which men differ. Hence the theory of music and ceremonies embraces the whole nature of man.’ Alas ! in years to come music itself became a ceremony, and ceremony a convention, while Confucianism hung like a formal garment on the bowed shoulders of the doctrinaire. Confucius must, however, share with another the paternity of T’ai Tsung.

It is related in a popular legend that the spirit of Lao Tzŭ appeared to a simple farmer in his rice-field and gave him the following command : ‘Go and inform your sovereign that I am his ancestor.’ Upon hearing this, Kao Tsu, father of T’ai Tsung, who was then on the throne, caused a temple to be erected to his first ancestor. The Book of the Way of Virtue, the *Tao Teh King* of Lao Tzŭ, became the household classic of the T’ang dynasty, and all members of the royal family were required to master its contents. Surely the world has never seen so small a scripture from any of its great teachers, nor one that apparently failed so completely to be understood, to hold or convince ! Taoism did not belong to its age any more than it does to ours. It belonged essentially to an age we dream of and build in our dreams, to the adornment of which we bring all things unwanted in a world of militarism and chaos—our ideals and aspirations and the secret jewels we are ashamed to display in the eyes of curiosity and indifference. Of Taoism it has been said by Mr Lionel Giles that it can never hope to hold its own in human affairs until, indeed, the new era dawns of which Plato dreamed long



ago, and this world of ours becomes ripe for the dominion of Philosopher-Kings.

At the centre of Lao Tzŭ's doctrine lies the spirit of adjustment ; but, unlike that of Confucius, which aimed at the social adjustment of man in relation to his fellow-men, the adjustment of Lao Tzŭ reached out through man and nature to the Godhead. The man of Tao was one who lived in harmony, not merely with his age, nation, class, and family, but with the four seasons, with night and day, joy and anger, sorrow and happiness, caution and remorse, getting the best out of life's varied moods and adapting himself to her myriad changes, making of himself, so far as mortal man is able, a microcosm of God. The instrumental music of Confucius gives place to something vaster and more inspiring in this universal orchestra of creation in which beings and elementals play their part. The attitude of Lao Tzŭ on the subject of Government may be gathered from the following : ' Govern a Great Nation as you would cook a small fish,' that is, don't overdo it. Again, ' Do not confine the people within too narrow bounds ; do not make their lives too weary. If you do not weary them of life, then they will not weary of you.' His ambition for the ruler was that he should rule so lightly that the people did not know they were being ruled. Living in the midst of a feudal age with warring states on all sides, he was the greatest opponent of militarism before Christ, whom he resembles more than any other teacher. Taoism discriminates between the thing done deliberately and the thing done unconsciously. The child learning to walk does so with deliberation, step after

step; the man walks easily and naturally. The essence of Taoism is a natural, implicit obedience to the divine urge from within, never a blind, unguided drifting along the stream of life. These, then, are the ancestors of T'ai Tsung—Tradition, Confucius, and Lao Tzŭ. Of these we may safely claim tradition as the greatest, for it is the foundation of the other two. And linked inseparably with tradition is filial duty.

‘The Emperor,’ says Prof. Giles, ‘has been uniformly regarded as the son of God by adoption only, and liable to be displaced from that position for the offence of misrule. If the ruler failed in his duties, the obligation of the people was at an end, and his divine right disappeared simultaneously.’

When T'ai Tsung formally ascended the throne in A.D. 627, he found the forces of Taoism and Confucianism about equally balanced, and there is no reason to suppose that he favoured either at the expense of the other. One of the most significant facts in all Chinese history is this—that when both Taoism and Confucianism flourished in emulation side by side, the Empire prospered; when one or the other obtained the mastery—the Empire shrank and fell to decay. Confucianism was the ethical system of the North, Taoism the idealist philosophy of the South. After T'ai Tsung, Taoism gradually triumphed over its rival, and weakness and anarchy were the result. Under the Ming dynasty, in 1421, Confucianism finally prevailed and the Empire became an easy prey to the Manchu. As the author has pointed out in a footnote to Mr H. G. Wells's *The Outline of History* :

' Both systems carried within them the seeds of decay. Taoism, divorced from the affairs of everyday life and the education of the people, lost itself in art, literature, and mythology. Confucianism added a layer of hard shell about the inner organism of social life.'

It died to music and ceremonies—music ceremonialized and ceremonies whose very meaning had been lost. But T'ai Tsung held himself above the rivalries of creeds and sects. His capital, the city of Chang-an, was open to Nestorians, Manichæans, and Muhammedans alike. In 634, Christianity was first introduced by the Syrian monk Olopun. In 638, the first Christian church was built, and we are able to catch a glimpse of a master mind in one of the most remarkable decrees ever issued from the throne-rooms of the world :

' The truth does not always appear under the same name, nor is divine inspiration always embodied in the same form. Religions vary in various lands, but the underlying principle of all is the salvation of mankind.'

And at the end of the decree is found the following summary of Christianity :

' Carefully examining the object of this doctrine, we find that it is profoundly mysterious and associated with striving through the power of the inner life (Lao Tzū's Wu Wei) ; it establishes the important points of our birth and growth, it helps animals and it profits mankind ; therefore, it should circulate wherever in the world we hold sway.'

T'ai Tsung's death-bed counsel to his son runs as follows :

' Be just, but above all things be humane, rule your passions, and you will easily rule the hearts of your subjects. Your good example will do far more than rigorous enactments would to make men fulfil their duties. Be sparing with punishments, generous with rewards, never put off till to-morrow a boon you would confer at once, but postpone the infliction of punishments till you are absolutely certain they are deserved.'

It took T'ai Tsung five years of incessant fighting to subdue eleven independent and rebellious kingdoms before the unity of China was accomplished and the victor returned to lay the spoils of conquest humbly at his father's feet. Thus, the pageant of the T'angs begins with horsemen—cavalry galloping to Chang-an, bridle to bridle, squadron on squadron, the sun glinting on war-worn armour, on the jewelled scabbards of their leaders, and their nodding plumes. As they approach the triple walls of the capital, horses are reined in and the headlong gallop steadies into the rhythmic trot of many thousands ; while from the drum-towers and bell-towers of the watching city break the clash and clamour of uncontrollable forces, of joy, delight, and triumph, and the rapture of sunlight after years of darkness. This great impetus of a young, indomitable leader and his gallant horsemen will surge on through three centuries till its strength is spent, its numbers decimated by treachery and ambush ; finally, a little band of phantoms vanishes into the dust of Chinese chronicle or rides into the twilight tapestries of romance. And how pitiful is

the inglorious end when the last of twenty Emperors, a trembling boy, humbly resigned the throne to a common adventurer, and the great seal of the T'angs fell into hands stained with his brothers' blood !

'By using a mirror of brass,' said T'ai Tsung, 'you may see to adjust your hat ; by using antiquity as a mirror, you may learn to foresee the rise and fall of Empires ; but by using men as a mirror, you may see your own merits or demerits.' The Emperors who followed him observed the first and largely neglected the other two of these counsels, and so the T'ang dynasty faded out. Enough has been said to show that T'ai Tsung was anything but a mere military adventurer, a Napoleon of the Far East. All his recorded sayings are those of a wise and far-seeing statesman, with a deep knowledge of human nature.

Equally well-balanced in body and mind, his chief recreations were sport and literature. Old Age Pensions and the Endowment of Motherhood, 'things whereof,' as Mrs Grantham points out, 'Europe is only just taking thought,' were two of his enactments. No conqueror knew better than he that 'an Empire founded on horseback cannot be governed on horseback.' Near his palace he built an immense library containing over 200,000 books. He had special rooms adjoining where he could meet scholars and discuss literary matters with them. Often he would work there from dawn to dusk. He founded government schools where arithmetic, law, penmanship, and other subjects were taught. From these schools boys of exceptional ability might pass on to the Imperial College,

where Physics, Oratory, and knowledge of Official Documents were included in the curriculum. From these young men the civil servants of China were chosen, and degrees were conferred on those who passed the examinations. T'ai Tsung established a standing army and a militia for home service. Under his protection the peasant was able to till his fields in safety, and the sense of national security quickened the whole body of the nation into action. So this great, peaceful Empire expanded in spirit as it fostered the unity in diversity of its natural forces, of Confucianism and Taoism, sanity in politics and idealism in art and literature, of guardianship over the freedom and security of its myriad workers within.

And simultaneously attracted by its fame and prosperity, embassies poured into it from all quarters ; from India, Nepal, and Thibet ; from the Greeks whose ambassador reached the Court in A.D. 640 ; from Persia ; from the first Caliphs of the new Muhammedan Power, Omar and Othman, and the neighbouring kingdoms of Corea and Japan. Chinese education exacted its tribute from the students of all nations. About 5,000 young men of foreign birth studied in the schools of Chang-an. ' Fleets of Chinese junks sailed up the Persian Gulf, whilst thousands of Arab merchants settled in Hangchow and other coastal cities.' The Empire under the first Emperors of the T'ang extended from the Yellow Sea to the Aral Sea in Turkestan, and from Siberia to Cambodia, the southernmost point in China. It was divided by T'ai Tsung into ten provinces ; while the outside dependencies, such as Mongolia, the Turkestans and Corea (which for a

time became subject to China), and Tonquin, were governed by six viceroys.

In taking leave of T'ai Tsung we may pause for a moment to look back at the scenes of triumph and the cities of his inspiration. Fenellosa, in his epochs of Chinese and Japanese Art, has painted this glowing picture of his time :

'We have seen,' says Fenellosa, 'that the root of the exceptional genius of T'ang lay in the variety of its sources, and in their fertile reaction upon each other when brought into contact at a common capital. The wealth, too, of the Empire had never before reached such a height. Buildings were grander, stuffs and clothing more exquisite, food more plentiful, the people happier, engineering works more stupendous, than in the Han dynasty or in any preceding period of Chinese history. The Eastern capital, Loyang, in the ancient, peaceful seats of the Hoangho valley, now became rebuilt upon a scale which accommodated more than two million people. Great public gardens and museums gave recreation to the people. The private palace gardens were raised on mighty walled terraces, pavilion-crowned, that enjoyed far prospects over lakes and bays—or sunk into cool, shady wells where plum trees shot their scaly arms into the shape of dragons, and ancient pines had been trained to writhe like serpents through the interstices of water-worn stone. Great jars of hard paste pottery covered with creamy glazes and tiles of deeper hue, probably purple and yellow . . . gave brilliancy to the landscape architecture. Pavilions rose above granite and marble foundations in rainbow tier after tier ; great banqueting halls, and blue silk awnings, and heavy portières, shot with golden thread, adding alike to the exalted coolness and the æsthetic transitions. Indeed, in these great days of

early T'ang, China had become the metropolitan garden of Asia, surpassing the splendours of Khan or Caliph at Samarcand and Damascus and Bagdad.

It should not be inferred, however, from this picture that T'ai Tsung was a kind of Oriental satrap, intent, as his predecessor Yang Ti of the Sui dynasty had been, upon hanging gardens and pleasure towers and Arabian-night palaces tunnelled deep into the ground, lest the sun should be put to shame by scenes of orgy that were better hidden. Not for himself, but as the symbol of power he represented, he built and planned according to the revenues and prosperity for which he was primarily responsible. With Confucius he recognized that 'to govern a country of a thousand chariots there must be reverent attention to business, and faithfulness, economy in expenditure, and love for the people.' His own words are almost an echo of the Master's teaching :

'The welfare of the Empire depends upon the People ; an Emperor who robs his people to enrich himself, is like a man who cuts off his own flesh to supply his stomach. . . . How many Emperors have owed their Ruin to their Ambition! What expenses were they at to maintain it ! And what heavy taxes were laid upon the poor to supply them ! When the people are racked and oppressed, what becomes of the Empire ? Is it not upon the brink of destruction, and what is the Emperor if the Empire perish ? '

And so, applying the lessons of history to himself, he adds, 'These are the reflections that served to regulate my desires.' After a reign of twenty-three



eventful years, he died and was succeeded by his son, Kao Tsung.

Not even the pitiful weakness of this Emperor, who surrendered the reins of government to a woman, could check the impetus of the national destiny started by his father. Too well had T'ai Tsung used the mirror of men ; his great generals swept on to victory, the commerce of China expanded, and the golden dawn of Chinese literature began with Wang Po and Ch'en Tzu-ang. Corea was added to the Empire—Mongolia was pacificated ; that ancient enemy of China, the Western Turkic tribe, was finally subdued, and after five years of good intentions, Kao Tsung paid his fatal visit to a Buddhist nunnery where one of his father's former favourites, Wu Chow, was interned. Attracted by her remarkable beauty, he had her removed to his palace, where shortly afterwards she became his Empress. Gradually he allowed the imperial power to fall into her capable hands until he became merely the consort of his wife. She put on the ceremonial robes of State used by the Emperor alone, and was present at every audience given by him.

It is hard to form a just estimate of this woman, for if she had the morals of Catherine the Great she had equally the shrewd wisdom of Queen Elizabeth. If the Buddhist monk, Hwai-yi, was her paramour and the infamous Rasputin of her reign, the great Prime Minister, Ti Jin-Kien, was the Burleigh of his age on whose counsels she leaned. Her love of pleasure was not greater than her untiring industry and application to the affairs of State. In the small hours of the morning, when

all Chang-an was asleep, she would appear in the audience chamber and with her cabinet devise measures for the government of the country. Strong-willed though she was, and headstrong in many things, she knew how to yield when danger threatened, and even gave up her cherished ambition of founding a new dynasty through her brother's house when civil war appeared to be the inevitable result. Unlike Catherine and other Empresses of her type, she never allowed the heart to interfere with the head. Hwai-yi was given no chance to meddle in politics. Ten thousand workmen built him the finest temple in China, which he burnt in a moment of pique ; but when he entered the hall of audience he had his face slapped by the Prime Minister for failing to pay him proper respect, and Wu Chow merely cast down her eyes and remained silent. Such was the awe inspired by this remarkable woman that when finally the victorious conspirators burst into her room, and life and death were balanced by a hair, they found a venerable figure seated Buddha-like on a low divan with features of inscrutable calm, and eyes that gazed through them and beyond them into the seventh heaven of Buddhahood. As one man, the company fell on their faces, while the leader humbly entreated her to accept the title of 'The Great and Sacred Empress, the equal of Heaven,' and a palace of suitable grandeur and space for so august a being. With a single inclination of her head she accepted, and so at the ripe age of eighty passed out of the spheres of romance and politics into a more exalted region. She is known to history as 'Wu, the equal of Heaven' ; she was at least equal to anything on

earth, and is probably still a source of perplexity to the Judge of the Infernal Regions.

Two emperors who stand between her and Ming-Huang are of little importance, and with Ming-Huang, 713-756, the second era of the T'ang dynasty commences. His prompt action when, hardly more than a boy, he had put himself at the head of a few soldiers and quelled the conspiracy of the Empress Wei to appoint herself Regent, saved the T'ang dynasty and gave the throne to his father, the rightful heir. But Jui Tsung had only reigned for three years when, following the precedent of the first T'ang Emperor, he resigned in favour of his son. And so began in splendour the long reign of the poet Emperor, ending in civil war, defeat, and exile, a brief return, then abdication and oblivion.

The first act of Ming-Huang's rule was in the direction of rigid economy of Court expenditure. During his reign he founded the famous Han-Lin Academy with its forty doctors, from whom were chosen the high officials of the State. He further divided the Empire into fifteen provinces, or three less than the present number. But his chief claim to a page of history lies in the direction of the spiritual expansion of his people in the quickening of their national life through the diversity of politics and commerce, literature and philosophy, music and painting. For thirty glorious years he kept the peace. They were amongst China's greatest years, and she made the most of them. The forces of Confucianism and Taoism were equally balanced, and the Emperor paid homage to both. Confucianism found its outlet in statesmanship, Taoism in the

arts of life ; but the one led to the other, for the great statesmen of the period were also its greatest literary men. Such a thing as a professional writer was almost unknown. Li Po stands out as almost a solitary exception, too temperamental for office.

The outlook of the T'ang mind on art is intensely interesting. It was essentially the reward of toil—a thing to be worked for and longed for and dreamed of, but only to be attained when the office is closed, the last audience given, and the last report dispatched.

‘ At last,’ sings Liu Chang—

‘ At last comes rest from the long routine,  
I launch my boat on the lilled pond and float  
Till I drift without will into sleep.  
Green shadows lattice the waters green ;  
Courtyard and house the silence keep.  
Then a bird breaks over the mountain-side  
And falls and calls from the crimson coronals  
Of the woods that awake to her cry.  
My silken robes in the wind float wide.  
O wings of delight, draw nigh ! draw nigh ! ’

Chinese literature is full of poems of this nature, expressing almost the rapture of a wild bird escaping from its cage. This is not to say that public affairs were neglected or scamped for the joy of leisure. Many of China's most famous poets, like Han Yu and Po Chu-i, were successful administrators and obtained promotion for the sheer merit of their public work. The secret of this remarkable duality in life is revealed by Chuang Tzū :

‘ Outwardly you may adapt yourself, but inwardly you must keep up to your own standard. In this there are two points to be guarded against.

You must not let the outward adaptation manifest itself within, or the inward without. In the former case you will fall, you will be obliterated, you will collapse, you will lie prostrate. In the latter you will be a sound, a name, a bogie, an uncanny thing.'

Thus the outward Confucianist and the inward Taoist never clashed. And yet it is impossible for two people dwelling in the same tenement to be utterly without influence upon each other. They meet as it were day by day on the same threshold, one coming and one going. Neither breaks upon the other's work, and therefore mutual respect is established. Atmosphere is more catching than scarlet fever. And so the Confucian widens his horizon and brings to public affairs a breadth of vision, a glimpse of ultimate purpose, and a sense of hidden beauty in the too familiar things of life, and works in harmony with his age. And the Taoist, no longer a solitary student among his books, or anchorite of the wooded hills and mountain torrents, goes to school with all men and learns the meaning of fellowship and communion with Tao through them.

The goal of every brilliant and ambitious student in the T'ang and every other dynasty was the Civil Service. And as education alone was the key to power and advancement, and not family influence, as is so often the case with us, it may be seen that the position of teacher was one of great importance and honour. Unfortunately, however, education lay entirely in the hands of the ultra-Confucian party, and in its higher branch consisted of knowledge attained from the Confucian classics with some

practice in the art of essay writing and calligraphy. So jealous were the Confucians of their prerogative that an unorthodox essay or any free interpretation of the spirit of Confucius would instantly disqualify the candidate.

‘But in the very completeness of the victory of the Confucian literates,’ says Mr Clennell, ‘lay concealed the seeds of weakness and decay. The scheme of education favoured by the latter scholasticism was . . . even from the first narrower, relatively, to the needs and knowledge of the time, than that which the old classical age had known. In the Confucian books music, horsemanship, chariot-driving, archery figure as important parts in the equipment of a gentleman. To the later scholar everything was sacrificed to the knowledge of books, and except that some history and kindred studies entered into the curriculum, the books were exclusively those dealing with canonical learning. Even history often seemed to close—to cease at any rate to be important or interesting, with the Han dynasty and the recovery of the Confucian classics. It was . . . classicalism run mad, a phenomenon, after all, not wholly unknown to our schools and universities.’

The classics referred to by Mr Clennell are five in number, the *Shu King*, or *Book of History* ; the *I King*, or *Book of Changes* ; the *Shi King*, or *Book of Poetry* ; the *Li Chi*, or *Book of Rites* ; the *Ch’un Ch’iu*, or *Spring and Autumn Annals of Lu* (the native state of Confucius). They form a compendium of history, divination, ballad literature, conduct, and ceremonialism, and provincial records which would correspond in an English curriculum to the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* ; the *Magical Writ-*

ings of Thomas Vaughan ; Percy's *Reliques*, and the formal odes of Court Laureates on appropriate occasions ; Day's *Sandford and Merton* combined with Lord Chesterfield's letters to his son ; and lastly, Morant's *History of Essex*. Imagine these to have been the sole tests of scholarship from A.D. 635 to 1905 in England, and you will get some idea of Chinese education up to the establishment of the republic.

Next to the Civil Service ranked agriculture and the military profession. T'ai Tsung founded a military Academy for the latter, where the art of war, the principles of which were laid down by Sun Tzu, 600 B.C., was taught. As to agriculture, the Chinese have been a nation of farmers from the earliest times. In the Spring equinox the Emperor himself, attended by his great officials, followed the plough. *The Odes of Confucius* give us wonderful little pictures of a farmer's life with its tireless industry and jolly breaks of feasting and revelry, a spirit not far removed from that of Merrie England in the days of Elizabeth. And throughout their history, Chinese poets have written in praise of a country life with its ever-varying interests, so different from the monotony of official routine. How much they loved their farms and understood the beauty of the homestead and its surroundings may be gathered from the following impression by Wen T'ung :

' Now pale flocks glimmer as they wind along ;  
Into the deep ravine the herd goes down ;  
The cold, dumb pool awaits the nightly throng  
Of wild geese wailing through the twilight brown.  
With jars of new-made wine old farmer Wang  
Gladdens the neighbours. Gloomy faces shine  
And dark robes kindle to the flush of wine.'

Yet there is another side to the country picture so Dutch in its feeling for quiet, ordered landscape and homely interiors. The call of the Capital to the writer, the artist, the teacher, was as insistent to them in the days of Ming-Huang as it is to us. A very little exile was sufficient for Li Po. Nature overwhelmed him with her sadness. He saw the passing of all things, and contrasted the alternations of day and night and of the four seasons with the life of man.

'Dawn reddens in the wake of night ; but the days of our life return not.

The eye contains a far horizon, but the wound of Spring lies deep in the heart.'

So he longs for a return to the Capital to forget among his contemporaries, his fellow-artists, the inevitable harvesting of humanity, and the earth's sorrow which overwhelms him in his isolation.

make thee forget.

Surely the earth-sorrow for the passing of Spring from her quiet places is overwhelming.'

After all, Chang-an, the Garden City, with its triple walls, their tall towers uprising at intervals ; its seven royal palaces all girdled with gardens ; its public parks and pleasure-grounds and museums ; its wonderful Yen tower, nine stories high encased in marble ; its drum towers and bell towers ; its canals and lakes with their floating theatres ; and, from roof to roof, the sheen and glitter of blue tiles, was earthly Paradise and Mecca to artist and scholar alike. It haunted all who left it with its appeal of beauty in architecture, gem-like buildings set in green girdles, its coming and going of strange



Embassies, the gorgeous cavalcade of Imperial hunting parties, the joyous, careless crowds drifting to the flower fair and the glimpse of familiar faces, members of the guild of good-fellowship, whose initiation test was a song, whose entrance-fee a cup of wine. No wonder if Tu Fu, an exile in far Ssech'uan to the south, dreams and finds all beauty of colour and the play of butterflies, and the rapture of swallows breasting to the shore, calling him back to the beloved Capital.

' And I that scan the distant view  
Of torn white clouds and mountains blue,  
Lift to the north my aching eyes ;  
'Tis there—'tis there the city lies !  
Chang-an, arise ! arise ! '

Butterflies and swallows, poets and dreams !—herein lies the weakness of the new impetus given by the poet Emperor. He divided Taoism from Confucianism, dreams from affairs, and sailed on the crest of the former into the backwaters of romance. Unfortunately, he was Emperor, and his Court and people followed him. Confucianism, left to itself, narrowed, as it always did, into mere officialism, and, after thirty cloudless years, the storm broke suddenly about him. His love for the beautiful T'ai Che'n, whom he made his Empress, led China to the brink of ruin. The Imperial economist turned spendthrift for her sake. Provinces and dependencies were ransacked for every imaginable delicacy, and Cloud Pavilions rose in a single night for her indulgence. Sings Li Po, Master of the Revels :

' 'Tis the time of glancing wings and the dancing  
Of moon-moths whirling the hours away ;

When the golden-armoured guardians are withdrawn,  
And pleasure haunts the rustling woods till Dawn.'

She rubbed the lamp of Aladdin so often that at last the dusky jinn<sup>†</sup> revolted and inspired the great Turkic general, An Lu Shan, with ambition and unhallowed love for his Empress. So An Lu Shan marches on the Capital, and General Ko, with 70,000 men, or perhaps 70,000 butterflies, goes down before him, and the Emperor, with a broken remnant, flees into the province of Ssech'uan. Here even the loyal few mutiny: 'Give us the head of this woman who has been the cause of all our misfortunes and we will turn on the enemy!' Ultimately Ming-Huang, to save the Empire and dynasty, consents, and history glows with drama where

'She of the dark Moth eyebrows, lily pale,  
Shines through the avenues of spears to die.'

The rest is flight, farther and farther Westward, and long years of exile. The final triumph of his son, Su Tsung, brings the strange and pathetic figure of an old and broken man back to his ruined Capital only to say farewell to this and this remembered haunt before he set sail for the spirit Islands of the Blest, 'Where gaily coloured towers rise up like rainbow clouds, and many gentle and beautiful Immortals pass their days in peace.'

The rest of the thirteen successors of Su Tsung need not detain us, for, as Mr Li Ung Bing points out, they were, with few exceptions, mere palace débauchés, or puppets in the hands of their eunuchs. The stream of Taoism broke into many rivulets. Here literature, there art or mythology,

wandered and watered a lonely countryside. But the main channel, such as it was, became silted with superstition and the emptyings from the crucibles of the alchemists. Emperors lost their lives through drinking the elixir of immortality, or their thrones through the fatal misinterpretation of Lao Tzū's doctrine of weakness, and Yang Chu's gospel of sensuality.

'Trains of misfortune,' writes Mr Li in his summing up of the T'ang, 'rolled over the dynasty, and the reigns of the few energetic rulers, notably Hsien Tsung (805-820) and Hsuan Tsung (847-859), may be likened to the sunset views on the Western horizon. They are beautiful but of brief duration, and soon to be rapidly buried under the darkness of night. The troubles that now came thick to hasten the downfall of the house of T'ang may be summarized under three headings, viz. the rise of the border tribes, the insubordination of the governors, and the power of the eunuchs.'

The year A.D. 907 saw the pitiful end of it, the downfall of a great dynasty, when a boy of sixteen surrendered the seal of Empire to a semi-barbarian general and set out on the long journey to Shantung, from which there was no return.

To say that the lessons of history differ according to nations and times and circumstances is merely to utter a truism. Yet there is one lesson which may be learnt from all the histories of the East and all periods, one inevitable cause of weakness and ultimate disaster. It lies in the outlook of the Oriental on his women. The denial of a human soul, the withholding of all freedom of movement and action and choice, the treatment of woman as a plaything,

a human butterfly, an instrument of passion, or a mere domestic slave, is responsible time after time for the ruin of Empire and dynasty. When Mr Li Ung Bing speaks of the power of the eunuchs he is paying tribute to the harem system with its atmosphere of secrecy and intrigue, the inevitable result of all human oppression, whether by law or immemorial custom. The influence of woman upon Chinese politics was sinister because the attitude of man towards woman was sinister. And so whenever the throne of China was filled by a woman the Ministers of State became the ministers of her passions and pleasures and extravagances. Alone among the fatal women of the East who brought dishonour and ruin to the Empires they misgoverned, the Empress Wu kept politics and pleasures apart. That is why the story of her long, and in many ways successful, reign is of exceptional interest to the historian. Confucius ignored women as he ignored Heaven. Both appeared to be beyond his understanding, and, therefore, he wisely left them alone. Only here and there do we get any indication of a cautious masculine mind on subjects he knew little about. 'Girls and servants,' said Confucius, 'are the most difficult people to handle. If you treat them familiarly they become disrespectful ; if you keep them at a distance they resent it.'

In Taoism we get but little, and that mostly in terms of Philosophy. For Taoism was above all the philosophy of world-music, the harmony of all things in Tao, and for Chuang Tzŭ the harmony of human life was produced by the blending of the female and male principles, the Yin and the Yang. One of the grandest passages in Chinese literature is the yellow

Emperor's description in the book of Chuang Tzŭ of his playing a piece of music called *Han-Ch'ih* :

‘ When I played again, it was the harmony of the Yin and Yang, lighted by the glory of sun and moon ; now broken, now prolonged, now gentle, now severe, in one unbroken, unfathomable volume of sound. Filling valley and gorge, stopping the ears and dominating the senses, adapting itself to the capacities of things—the sound whirled around on all sides, pure and clear. The spirits of darkness kept their domain. Sun, moon, and stars pursued their appointed course.’

Such was the harmony of T'ai Tsung, one of the noblest characters of Chinese history, and his queen Sin Hwei, whom he married at the age of twenty and worshipped all his life. Her last words to her husband are memorable and in keeping with the simplicity of her character :

‘ I have not been of much use while I lived, and therefore I don't want any one to be made to suffer by my death. Build no magnificent grave for me, and then the people will not hate me, since they have not been called upon to make any sacrifice in building it. Neither put any jewels and precious stones in my coffin. All that I want is a tile under my head for a pillow, and my hair fastened up with some wooden pins.’

The Empire of Sin-Hwei lay beyond her time, as it lies beyond ours. It is the heritage of the humble that is building, stone by stone, for the future of the race.

## CHAPTER VIII

### CHINA'S GOLDEN AGE

#### THE SUNG DYNASTY (960-1279)

IN the dusk of a June day we walk in our garden, and a sense of life enchanted beyond all human magic, revealing its guarded secrets one by one, comes over us. It is the liberating hour of the transfiguration, when every flower seems touched with ethereal light, when we glimpse in every enhancement of colour and outline a soul rising with incense and adoration. Suddenly, almost before we have time to blend in communion with our living friends and fellow-worshippers, colour after colour fades, outlines are dimmed and withdrawn, and we are left alone in a garden of ghosts. Yet it is impossible to isolate this hour from the hours that have gone before. Days and nights of toil through rising sap and climbing stem and opening calyx have preceded it. And so with history ; the hour of national efflorescence which we remember has been prepared by the more strenuous hours we forget. But it is the glamour of the unfolded rather than the process of unfolding that appeals to most of us. And in this connection we attach too much importance to dynasties which are seldom indications of definite periods. For the ages and periods and generations melt into each other, and the line of demarcation is difficult to fix. But if we use the name of a dynasty as the symbol of a period we can

only do so if there is a definite break, a new impetus to distinguish it from the dynasties that come before and after. There is no such definite break between the T'ang and the Sung, and the new impetus is but the slow, inevitable outcome of the old and not the result of any influx of new forces from without. The Sung is simply the culmination of the Tang with a brief interval of fifty years between, with little Courts in Ssuch'uan and the South guarding and preserving the spirit of the older dynasty. The difference between the two is the difference between dawn and sunset of a summer day, the joy and freshness of dawn passing into the languor and drowse of noon, yielding in turn to the restless flow and ebb of sunset.

A merry tale opens the chronicles of the Sung, resembling the famous story of 'The Sleeper Awakened,' in the Arabian Nights. It relates how a certain General Chao K'uang-yin after a convivial banquet fell asleep in his tent. Next morning he awoke to find himself covered with the Imperial Yellow Robe and his officers with drawn swords clamouring without for the new Emperor. Thus the drunken frolic of a night made history for three hundred years and General Chao awoke from his sleep to become the Emperor T'ai Tsu and founder of the Sung dynasty.

The contrast between T'ang and Sung is well illustrated by a comparison between the characters and actions of their respective founders, since T'ai Tsung and not his father Kao Tsu was the real founder of the House of T'ang. T'ai Tsu represents the waning power of late afternoon when the freshness and vigour of the day are gone and the sun is

declining from its zenith. Neither as soldier, administrator nor as a central creative force can he be compared with T'ai Tsung. He was, however, all that the old Jesuit historian du Halde claims for him—'a Prince of great Judgment, diligent in business, sober (his elevation to the throne evidently being responsible for this), prudent, liberal, affectionate to his People, modest, frugal, good natured and naturally inclined to clemency.' With this long string of qualities hung like a rope of pearls round his neck by posterity, he could not have been other than a model Emperor. One of his first acts was to order that the four gates of his palace, fronting the four quarters of the Universe, should be left open, 'desiring, as he said, that his House should be like his Heart, always open to his subjects.' That he possessed both foresight and a sense of humour will be seen from the following story which relates to a return banquet given by him to the officers who were responsible for the greatness thrust upon him.

On this occasion sobriety was on the side of the host, and his military guests awoke to find themselves in mufti, but dowered with all the pleasant amenities of civilian life, great estates and administrative posts in distant provinces. Henceforth all appointments to military rank were strictly in accordance with merit, promotion by examination in the art of war, in horsemanship, and shooting with the long-bow took the place of favouritism and intrigue. His hatred of unnecessary bloodshed and regard for human life were shown in his orders to his generals to spare the city of Nanking from the horrors of sack and outrage, and in the generous



distribution of rice to the starving inhabitants. And, although no Empress of the outstanding character of Sin-Hwei shared his throne, the mother of T'ai Tsu was a remarkable woman and a guiding force in her son's career. When the officers of state came to congratulate her on his succession and the founding of a new dynasty, she answered them, ' I have been told that the art of ruling well is very difficult ; if my son governs his subjects with wisdom, I shall receive your compliments with pleasure ; if not, I shall readily forsake these honours to finish my days in my former station.'

Before she died she made her influence on the succession to the throne felt by the Emperor. She implored him in naming his successor to be guided by the interests of the State and not by the partiality of a father, adding, ' Remember, my son, that you owe the Crown much less to your own merit, than to the infancy of the Prince of the former reigning family.' So T'ai Tsu appointed his brother T'ai Tsung to succeed him. But T'ai Tsung was little else than a respectable book-worm with 80,000 volumes to browse on, and no leader of men. And the same may be said of the sixteen imperial dilettanti in the art of ruling who followed him. For although the Sung period may be divided into Northern and Southern there was no real break in the dynasty, merely a transference of Capitals from Pien Liang in the North to Hangchow in the South.

And Kao Tsung, first Emperor of the Southern Sung, was the ninth son of the ill-fated Hui Tsung, the Emperor so much admired by M. Hovelague as ' poet, philosopher, and painter of genius, and

the greatest collector, the finest critic of art that China has ever known.'

Hui Tsung, however, was not a Pierpont Morgan, any more than T'ai Tsung with his Library was an Andrew Carnegie. It is difficult to believe of him, as history records, that he was a great student and disciple of the Taoist Way, even though he flattered himself with the sounding titles of 'Sublime Ruler, Master of the Doctrine, and Prince of the Way.' For the Way of Tao is essentially the Way of Adaptation to both aspects of life, the outward and the inward.

The danger of mysticism is always in the insistence of the reality of the inner life coupled with negation of, or indifference to, life without. If you elect to become a Chang Chih Ho, refusing to mix in the whirl of human affairs, you may weigh your godhead against the dust and find the dust too light. But who was Chang Chih Ho that he should set his soul against the souls of others, and in what way does his dust differ from that of the common crowd? There is only one valid reason for withdrawal, and that is to draw others after you and so become a temporary city of refuge and healing for the fugitive and the stricken. But Hui Tsung, long after he had proclaimed himself a follower of the Way, lingered on the throne he professed to despise. And since to follow the Way is to adjust ourselves to all circumstances, changes and conditions in which we find ourselves, it was for him to tread the Emperor's Way laid down by Lao Tzŭ. 'A sage has said, "He who can take upon himself the nation's shame is fit to be lord of the land. He who can take upon himself the nation's calamities is

fit to be ruler over the Empire.” ’ Between A.D. 1100 and 1126 when Hui Tsung, hearing the tramp of the Nu-Chen Tartars, abdicated in favour of his eldest son, China had known both shame and calamity. And the Emperor, whose throne-room had become an artist's studio, was the greatest calamity of all :

‘ Hui Tsung was a great painter himself, with a nervous, vibrant brush-stroke working brilliant-eyed hawks, delicate flowers, swaying pine-branches as readily as the marvels of the world of spirits and star-gods, and the tragic grandeur of rock-bound mountain solitudes. Indeed, art, and the religiousness and the visions which beget art were his constant, perhaps his only absorbing interest.’

He had, however, another absorbing interest—that of art collector, and the drier pages of the chronicle become almost as eloquent as Mrs Grantham on the subject :

‘ He had an inordinate passion for objects of art, which he collected from all parts of his empire and placed in a museum which he had built specially for their reception. His whole energies seemed to be bent on adding to his collection, and men were particularly favoured who informed him of any curiosity they had discovered. In consequence of this, any one who was possessed of any article of antiquity either at once gave it up or hid it in the ground, for no home was safe from the spies in the employ of Ts'ai Ching (the Prime Minister) whose aim it was to please his royal master.’

Not for one moment would we deny that creative power which is the attribute of genius to the un-

fortunate Hui Tsung. But to every man the Tao appears in a different form : the way of the painter is not the Emperor's Way. And the latter can only be followed by one who possesses the art of ruling. Had Hui Tsung really possessed this art he would have applied to his country the teaching of Kwan Tzŭ, the oldest of the Taoist writers, in the 7th century B.C., that

' the Tao is that by which the highest man guides the people. Hence the virtues and blessings of the Tao of the Universe issue through the ruler ; his measures and orders (based on Tao) he transmits to his ministers, through whom the officers have their tasks imposed on them, and the task of the people then consists in doing their work with due regard to their orders. . . . The people follow him who has the Tao as the hungry follow the food which they see before them. . . . '

And Lao Tzŭ, as Morgan de Groot points out, expressed the same idea that

' to him who firmly holds the superior model (the Tao), the whole world goes ; for by going to him, it remains beyond the reach of injury, and enjoys general rest and peace. If a ruler can maintain the Tao, all beings will spontaneously visit him (to offer their subjection and tribute).'

Thus it will be seen that the course of all administration and conduct of human affairs according to the Chinese is spirituality. It is a spiral descent from a fine point through increasing whorls to a democratic base. It is utterly unlike the popular idea of government in the West of to-day where

the wishes and desires of the people stand first with their representative, while in ancient China the Emperor was the interpreter of the purposes of the Creator to His creations. The primary aim of the great exemplars of kingcraft from Yao and Shun to T'ai Tsung and T'ai Tsu was the material prosperity of the people, but only because it was a means to a higher end than the contentment of a prosperous farm-yard. Through them the rains of Heaven and the solar rays filtered down to the roots of the national tree, and through them the sap was drawn up to the topmost branches. In the admonitions addressed to the great sovereigns of antiquity, the people are referred to as the root of the country, whom rulers are warned not to despise, whose wishes they must not oppose *in order to gratify their own desires*, and whom above all things they must foster and cherish ; for the King's business is 'to care reverently for the people,' 'to give repose to the multitude,' to 'labour for their lives and increase.' But while the purpose of Heaven should have the strength of iron, the glove of administration should have the grip of velvet. As shown in the preceding chapter, the people were to be ruled so lightly that they did not know they were being ruled. A remarkable illustration of this unconsciousness of rule occurs in *The Odes of Confucius*, many of which are ballads of the peasantry composed and sung by the people themselves :

' We get up at sun-rise,  
At sun-set we rest,  
Dig wells and drink,  
Till fields and eat ;  
*What is the might of the Emperor to us ?* '

Wang An-shih, the statesman who lived in the period of the Northern Sung dynasty from A.D. 1021 to 1086, has been regarded by many scholars as the father of Socialism in China. His main object, however, seems to have been to increase 'the might of the Emperor,' as State-representative, for active interference in the system of administration. In his own words, 'the State should take the entire management of commerce, industry, and agriculture into its own hands, with a view to succouring the working classes and preventing them from being ground into the dust by the rich.'

Certainly in his methods he was surprisingly up-to-date from a modern collectivist point of view. Heavy taxation of the rich, total exemption of the poor, old-age pensions, unemployment dole, State loans to farmers, a comprehensive land tax which would make the mouth of an English Chancellor water, unrestricted copper export, tampering with the currency, and the establishment of State Banks, which also carried on the functions of pawnshops and markets, are some of the enactments of Wang An-shih. Like all reformers in a hurry, he made the pace too hot to last, and 'Socialism in our time' came to an end with him, although spasmodic attempts at revival on the part of hordes of superfluous officials kept the movement going for a few years after his death.

'A similar experiment,' says Mrs Grantham, 'had been tried under Han Wu Ti and failed, as did Wang An-shih's, as do all such rationalistic contrivances which ignore the subtle facts of life and the fundamental law that the administration of a great country and the arithmetic of barter and

banking stand at such opposite poles of thought, they cannot be carried on efficiently by the same men or the same machinery.'

But at the base of Wang-An-shih's teaching lay the idea of the self-sufficiency of the State. Inspiration from above was but a Taoist tale, and the Emperor was nothing but a super-bureaucrat issuing orders to the bureaucrats beneath him. The aim was utilitarian and nothing more, and as such it failed. Its principal concern was national enrichment by means of financial manipulation leading to a wider distribution of public revenue.

Thus the later history of the Sung is one of violent oscillations between extreme materialism and extreme æstheticism, exemplified by Wang An-shih and his puppet Emperor Shen Tsung on the one hand, and Hui Tsung with his pliant minister Ts'ai Ching on the other. Yet this particular chapter of national history would not be worth dwelling on were it not for the light that it throws on Chinese national characteristics. As a nation China has cared very little about the purely utilitarian side of life which is of such supreme importance to nations in the West. But it has cared very much for the æsthetic ideals of life, and, linking art and utility together in the common objects of household service, has profoundly influenced Western standards and everyday surroundings.

The word *China* for the ordinary citizen of the West stands for utility rising into beauty, whereas the Chinese would have put it the other way about. Heaven must descend to Earth before Earth can respond to Heaven. Earth is the pupil of Heaven,

and from the latter she learns the true value and the meaning of things. Tea-cups, plates, and bowls are ceremonial objects connected with the art of life, and not, in the first instance, objects of necessity. Eating and drinking and the common meal have their place in the universal 'art of being in the world,' for, 'it is in us that God meets with Nature, and yesterday parts from to-morrow.' Every act has its own significance expressed in art based on religion. We do not eat to exist but to live, with all that *living* implies. If we hold ourselves cheaply, the coral insects of a meaningless atoll in the boundless ocean of extinction, we shall think cheaply and act mechanically as millions are doing at the present moment. Yet if there is indeed a Creative Force, a Deity whom men of science have called 'The Supreme Artist,' and man is the supreme creation of His art, then what is man to God but a collaborator in the purpose of Creation? And by what method can that purpose be fulfilled save by the method of Art, whose language is light, whose poetry is mathematics, whose music is the adjustment in harmony of sphere to sphere, life to life, the individual note to the social chord? And the appeal of all great art, as Mr Hugh Fausset puts it,

'is not to our minds or our senses as self-sufficient faculties, but to our whole being. It transforms us, in the moment of experiencing it, from imperfectly co-ordinated beings capable of detached and self-regarding appreciation or criticism into wholly unified and animated beings. We receive at once a fullness of life and a new and heightened awareness of its meaning.'



The philosopher-kings of China, from Yao and Shun to Ch'ien Lung in the 18th century, answered the appeal of the greatest and most comprehensive of the arts—the art of life—and by transforming themselves into wholly unified and animated beings they set an example to their filial subjects, the people prospered and the land enjoyed a noontide peace. The real impetus was that of the whole man at the head of affairs, neither politician nor military leader, artist nor scholar, but all in one, carrying the whole nation along with him. To an age of specialism in single subjects this may seem an undesirable or else impossible position for any man to assume. But it must be remembered that the Emperor of China was Father of his people ; that as such he was a specialist in the conduct of life of the whole family. The selection of an heir-apparent was by no means limited to the eldest son. Even as an example to the rest it was incumbent upon the Emperor to become the father of many sons, and the idea, although it was not always carried out in practice, was to select the fittest and best trained to assume paternity for the nation. T'ai Tsung was the second son of his father Kao Tsu, the nominal founder of the T'ang dynasty. A model Prince is thus described in *The Book of Odes* :

‘ That great and noble Prince displayed  
The sense of right in all he wrought ;  
Adjusting justly, grade by grade,  
The Spirit of his wisdom swayed  
Peasant and peer ; the crowd, the court.’

As we read page after page of Chinese history we find that so long as the expert in wholeness, the man who cultivated his whole nature to correspond

with the spiritual, æsthetic and physical needs of his people, sat on the throne the land was at peace, and a feeling of unity pervaded all classes. When his energies were diverted into other channels than the main channel, weakness, corruption and anarchy ensued, and a strong, well-ordered Empire became an easy prey for hungry Tartar hordes. So with the House of Sung when its rulers turned aside from the art of ruling to dabble in finance, like Shen Tsung, or to become art collectors at the expense of others, like Hui Tsung, the walls of national security were allowed to crumble and the enemy stormed through the breach. Khitans or Iron Tartars, Nu-Chens or Golden Tartars, and lastly Mongols came streaming through every gap, leaving a trail of blackened ruins in their wake. And as Genghis Khan looks down upon the level plains with their rice-fields and meticulous cultivations, on populous towns with their tiled pagodas gleaming in the sunrise, we may hear him calling to his horsemen : ' This is no land ! Let us stamp out the Chinese that grass may grow ! Then we shall pasture our horses.'

But the time of Genghis Khan and the Mongols is not yet. The Golden Tartars must have their day, and the spoil and the heritage of the Northern Sungs is theirs for the taking. They have but to knock at the gates of the City and they will open. For here is Art divorced from the national spirit, cloistered in the studio, a gallery of white falcons instead of an armed and disciplined host, an Emperor busy in the Museum fingering the latest find of Han pottery, or day-dreaming amid Taoist statuary in his Palace of Unending Bliss.

A dealer in antiques is Minister of State and the caravans of bric-à-brac from the provinces are coming in. But the rich and well-to-do, the far-seeing and the faint-hearted are packing up and fleeing south to Nanking. The end of the Northern Sung is at hand, and in a few brief years Pien Liang will go down and be numbered with the capitals of the past, with Chien Kang, and Lo Yang, and Chang-an and many a nameless scene of fallen grandeur shrunk to grass-grown mound and hollow shell. Some, like Chang-an, still linger in the shadows of their greatness, the memory of others is enbalméd in the poems of Wang Po, of Kao Shih and Tu Fu. 'How many autumn moons?' asks Wang Po :

'How many autumn moons have steeped those palace walls !  
And paled the shattered beams !  
What is their royal builder now ? A Lord of dust ?  
An Emperor of dreams ? '

The dynasty of the Southern Sung is merely a prolongation of the Northern with a change of capital, Hangchow for Pien Liang, and the ninth son of Hui Tsung reigning in the place of the eldest son, carried into captivity by the Golden Tartars. For 152 years it held the throne till, in 1279, when the last war-fleet of the Sung was blockaded by the Mongol Armada, Lu Hsiu-fu took the little Emperor in his arms and with him vanished beneath the waves.

We in the West know more about Hangchow and the glories of its Court under the Sung than we do of Chang-an under the T'angs. For to us it is 'the noble and magnificent City of King-sai, and its chronicler is Marco Polo.' Little more than

ten years after the extinction of the Sungs the great Venetian traveller visited Hangchow and wrote down for an incredulous world the marvels he beheld therein, of its streets and canals, its market-squares, its delightful situation between lake and river, its stone bridges and the girdle of water beyond its walls 'about forty miles in length,' the friendly charm and hospitality of its inhabitants, and its beautiful women. Certain points, however, in Marco Polo's description of Hangchow should be specially noted. There is none of the dirt and squalor that travellers associate with the modern cities and towns of China.

'The streets connected with the market-squares are numerous, and in some of them are many cold baths, attended by servants of both sexes, to perform the offices of ablution for the men and women who frequent them, and who from their childhood have been accustomed at all times to wash in cold water, which they reckon highly conducive to health. At these bathing-places, however, they have apartments provided with warm water for the use of strangers. All are in the daily practice of washing their persons, and especially before their meals.'

Since the beginning of self-respect is the practice of personal cleanliness, we are not surprised when we find other qualities arising on its foundation. 'The greater part of them are always clothed in silk.' 'Their houses are well built and richly adorned with carved work'; they are industrious above all in the handicrafts, where each of the twelve trades 'considered to be superior to the rest, as being more generally useful' has a thousand

workshops, 'and each shop furnishes employment for ten, fifteen or twenty workmen.' They are honest and upright in their transactions, for 'they conduct their mercantile and manufacturing concerns with perfect candour and probity.' They are a friendly people, 'and persons who inhabit the same street, both men and women, from the mere circumstance of neighbourhood, appear like one family.' In their married life 'they are free from jealousy or suspicion of their wives, to whom great respect is shown, and any man would be accounted infamous who should presume to use indecent expressions to a married woman.' At the end of the day, when office and factory are closed, boating seems to have been one of their principal amusements, and no wonder. For the lake, which Staunton centuries later described as about four miles in diameter,

'extends the whole length of the city ; on one side, you have a view, as you stand in the boat, at a certain distance from the shore, of all its grandeur and beauty, its palaces, temples, convents, and gardens, with trees of the largest size growing down to the water's edge, whilst at the same time you may enjoy the sight of other boats . . . continually passing you, filled in like manner with parties in pursuit of amusement.'

To Père Martini and the Jesuit fathers to come, this 'pursuit of amusement' was deserving of the greatest censure. He rolls his eyes and holds up his hands to Heaven as he speaks of these 'slaves of voluptuous delights.' And Polo himself, a stranger with no knowledge of Chinese or of Chinese history,

untouched by the spirit of her philosophy, art and poetry, to which he makes no allusion, takes in the coloured ebb and flow of life on the surface and marvels but never reflects. Had he read but one chapter of Huai-Nan Tzŭ, the great philosopher of the 2nd century B.C., he would have come across the following passage : ' Those who depend upon their ears for hearing and their eyes for seeing, put their bodies to great weariness, and do not succeed in perceiving clearly even then.'

And a little farther on he would have arrived at the very heart of a philosophy which tells us that men ' are as vexed and miserable as though all were over with them, and why? *Because they do not use their hearts in the enjoyment of outward things, but use outward things as a means of delighting their hearts.*'

But this happy, flowing crowd is neither vexed nor miserable. Its units are not aimlessly adrift on the clear waters of Lake Si-hu to escape from themselves, to drug their restless hearts with sensual pleasure. Theirs is the daily act of communal worship at the shrine of Nature, enhanced by every art and aspiration of man, his ' palaces, temples, convents and gardens,' in harmony with the landscape. All classes and all ages have met, as their fathers did in the days of good King Facfur, to render homage under Heaven for the blessings showered by Heaven on the lands and waters of this earthly Paradise. And standing up in his boat, the Venetian governor under Kublai Khan of the distant city of Yang-chou, paid unconscious tribute to the spirit of abiding peace, whose guardians were not the Khans of Kambalik but the mountains that brooded over the jewelled sunsets mirrored

around Kin-sai. Truly the great Khan, his Master, was responsible for the outward and visible signs ; for the unbroken rhythm of business and recreation ; for the well-disciplined police, the watchmen striking the hour, or beating the fire-alarm ; for the infantry and cavalry brigades, whose principal occupation was marching and counter-marching with long intervals of dress parade ; for the markets of marvellous convenience, abundance and cheapness, where ' for the value of a Venetian silver groat, you may purchase a couple of ducks.'

But the spirit of peace that hovered over Hangchow was far more ancient than any Pax Mongolia lasting barely a century and a half. It was contemporary with the ancient hills that remembered the days of Yao and Shun. Dynasties came and went, and with them it waned, but never drifted utterly away from a land haunted by philosophers and anchorites, whose trails were blazed with flowers. And if it fell from Heaven, as all China's poets and artists would have us believe, it rose again in the mighty script of China's oldest classic, the *Yih King*, through which Confucius was informed and Lao Tzu inspired. Who was Fu Hsi, the astronomer-king and author of this book, linking the Past with the Present, 2800 B.C. with the world of modern science and the most advanced thought of to-day ? We may reply that it matters little who he was, but what he stood for matters a great deal. For Fu Hsi was the first representative of his race to whom the reformers and thinkers, politicians and idealists went as the pitcher goes to the well. New thought is largely a reinterpretation of old thought, even as the thinker himself is the child, by intellec-

tual descent, of the thinkers that came before him. Thought develops as thinking habits are acquired, and knowledge, both old and new, is assimilated.

But there is nothing new in thought without some basis in the thought of the past. So even the Neo-Confucianism of the Sung, whose great exponent was Chu Hsi (1130-1200), had its origin in the far-off *Canon of Changes* or *Iih King*. As a later writer, quoted by Professor Giles, points out: 'Shao Yung tried to explain the *Canon of Changes* by numbers, and Ch'eng I by the eternal fitness of things; but Chu Hsi alone was able to pierce through the meaning and appropriate the thoughts of the prophets who composed it.' Because he went back to the father of Chinese thought, and therefore ancestor of both Lao Tzŭ and Confucius, the Sung philosopher was able to transform the old Confucianism into its original fluidity. In other words, he resolved it from a series of frozen formulæ into a living stream. For the power of the ancient philosophy wielded by Chu Hsi became a liberating power. It touched the scholars and formalists of its age and converted them into human beings. Similarly the power of Taoism touched the harsh asceticism and life-negations of India and transformed them into the Zen school of Buddhism suggesting 'that fresh spontaneity which nature and life and normal society exhibit,' and Western writers like Mr Hugh Fausset would have us return to.

So for a brief but glorious period of history three great systems of thought—Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism—flowed in near parallels with 'intakes' of clear water passing from one to the other, Confucianism on the right, Taoism in the



centre, and Buddhism on the left. The Sung was essentially an age of individuality set free.

‘The true spiritual type,’ says Fenellosa, ‘is individuality ; not a negative freedom of abandonment, but the place in which the needs of readjustment must find room. Moral discipline, but not asceticism, is its privilege. There is no natural inferiority in human souls, not even of children and women. . . . Over all is Heaven, through all is harmony and beauty ; nature and man are brothers ; the soul is but a child growing more and more into the stature of its parent, Heaven.’

In 1079, when Wang An-shih obtained supremacy over his opponents in the northern capital of Pien-Liang, the poet Su Shih <sup>1</sup> was degraded from office and sent as Governor of Hangchow in the distant South. There he rebuilt the ruined causeways intersecting Lake Hsi-hu and the broken bridges in this City of Canals. At intervals, from the sheer embankments of solid masonry flanking the city from the lake, wide gateways gave access to shipping. So when, in 1138, the Sung under Kao Tsung chose Hangchow in preference to Nanking as their capital, it was already a great emporium for trade, a city awakened from its long sleep by a poet's wand. And all that Marco Polo saw with the eye of a contemporary may be supplemented by the vision of Fenellosa looking back upon the past and giving us a glimpse of a life which makes our own, through its lack of co-ordination and regard for real values, seem poor and trivial and without aim or ideal :

‘The sort of life that came upon Hangchow with the practical cessation of party strife may be called

<sup>1</sup> Better known as Su Tung-p'o.

the most idyllic illumination of all human experience. Statesmen, artists, poets, Zen priests, met upon a basis of spiritual equality, were close friends interested in each other's works, and often combined functions in one and the same person. They spent their mornings at work in the city ; but their afternoons, evenings and holidays on the lakes, at the terraces on the causeways or the rocky islands, among the Buddhist temples that invited them by winding inclines up every steep, in the countless villas that dotted the edge of every bay and creek. Great two-storied pavilions looked down upon the lake from above the city walls, or from the bastioned rocks, where parties might congregate, and in conviviality enjoy the beauties of sunsets or discuss poetry. These lovely villas surrounded themselves with gardens in which cool terraces, and graceful marble bridges, and lotus ponds walled in with stone and overhung by swaying trees, played a necessary part.'

Thus an analysis of the working hours, the intellectual and re-creative life of this period shows us that the mornings were devoted to the daily routine of affairs public or private ; the remaining hours belonged to recreation.

The latter may be divided into intellectual and artistic activity on the one hand, and relaxation on the other. But the difference between the relaxations of a Chinese crowd in the Sung and the later Mongol dynasty and a Western crowd of to-day is as great as the time and space that divide them. Rowing, sailing, hill-climbing, and exploration of the countryside were the common pleasures of a busy folk whose working hours commenced with daylight. And each had a common object—to take

the flying moment as it passed. These people were artists, from the official of high rank, the wealthy merchant, down to the humblest peasant. And all that Marco Polo, and the Jesuits that followed him, saw without understanding was the tribute paid to the transient beauty and ever-changing aspect of the Cosmic Spirit whose shrine was centred beneath the mountain range that brooded over the waters of the lake. The Phoenix Mountain, the Mountains of the Stone-Screen, the Lonely Summit, the Mountain of Music, the White Dragon Hill, the Hill of Serenity, the Celestial Pillar, the Eye of Heaven, the Summit of Ten Thousand Pines, and the Mountain of the Red Twilight, with its lower slopes aglow with peach-blossom in the spring—these were the guardian deities of Hangchow. Su Shih had fringed the shores of the lake with weeping willows and girdled them with blue lotus. Everywhere man collaborated with Nature ; his temples, pavilions and pagodas were planted rather than built in places where their graceful outlines and the brilliant sheen of glazed tiles enhanced the beauty of the landscape. And at nightfall they became the jewels worn by Earth in emulation of the far-off jewellery of Heaven, when the slender, pointed towers were transformed into shafts and pillars of fire against a moonless sky, and, along the canals and rivers and lakes of Hangchow and Suchow,

‘ The lanterns of the river-boats like angry meteors glowed.’

In the last years of the Southern Sung, in the hush that came before the storm, when the Mongol clouds were gathering, and the North was black with omens left unread, the lords of creation walked

abroad in the cool of the day to enjoy their handiwork and dream the fabric of to-morrow. And while

‘ The scented breeze embalms the light of the morn,  
Athwart the twelve stories of the mountain  
The Court ascends in the night to the Pavilion of Leisure,  
To enjoy the panorama from above,  
Yielding a glimpse of fairyland when all the houses are  
lighting up.’

Throughout the East the moon has been the symbol of sadness, of the transience of all things and the passing of the generations. Yet there is an old Chinese saying that the moon of Hangchow is always happy, as though sharing in the happiness of the city beneath. Happiness is essentially a state of being—of well-being—but above all it is a sacramental state, for the wine of happiness can only be partaken in communion. And with the Chinese communion is not with some small section of one’s fellow-worshippers at a particular shrine, nor even with humanity, but with life in every aspect ; not with contemporary life alone, but with a living past and a future which widens its avenues and horizons to receive us all, travellers and adventurers and wayside planters and designers in eternity. The emotion of joy arises from the creative spirit that urges us to work towards happiness. It comes with a purpose that is not ours in any personal sense, for any personal gain or gratification. We know not what purpose we are fulfilling, and we care not ; it is sufficient for us to know that it is part, however small, of the Creator’s increasing purpose. Bergson has said that ‘ joy always announces that life has succeeded, gained ground, conquered.’ With pro-

found regard we must differ, for to us, as to the Chinese, joy is in the doing and not in the accomplishment. Neither does it arise from conquest, but from surrender and submission, from giving ourselves that we may be given and so return a thousand-fold. Life gains ground and conquers only when it has rendered itself for life, that life more abundant may ensue. 'Wherever there is joy there is creation ; the richer the creation the deeper the joy.' That is true, since joy and creation are inseparable and we cannot create without feeling from afar the thrill of the Spirit that once moved upon the face of the waters, bringing light to birth and dividing light from darkness. At no period of history has the spirit of joy in creation descended to reign on earth as under the Sung dynasty at Hangchow.

Marco Polo felt its presence, and the travellers who followed him at long intervals—Père Le Comte, Du Halde, Martini, and the Englishmen Staunton and Barrow. It lingers still 'in some of these exquisite gardens—overgrown perhaps but with strange latticed windows and circular doors opening from cool interiors.' But the golden autumn of Southern China vanished in 1273 when the two frontier fortresses were stormed by Kublai Khan's Mongol horde, and city after city went down before the Persian mangonels and Marco Polo's ordnance. The great creative spirit of joy never ruled again in Hangchow. For the brief renaissance of the Ming returned to the past but only to copy and imitate. And all that the Mings could salvage of the Golden Age, together with their faithful and even beautiful reproductions of its art, were powerless to recall it.

Henceforth the creative spirit of the Chinese began to ebb with the Yuen dynasty of the Mongols and their Ming successors. The long anti-cyclone of halcyon days went drifting across the sea, along the coasts of Corea and beyond the Straits to Japan. For the sons and inheritors of the T'ang and Sung were the Japanese of the Ashikaga period in the latter half of the 14th century. A.D. 1368 is a most memorable year in the history of the Far East, when the Ming Emperor Shu Yuan-chang was proclaimed in China and the third Ashikaga Shogun, Yoshimitsu, in Japan. A common hatred of the Mongols drew the two countries together, and three years later the Japanese sent over a special mission to the Chinese Court at Nanking. Gradually the intercourse between them became that of pupil and teacher. For the Japanese had nothing to offer and everything to learn. The brief spells of Chinese culture in Japan during the 7th and 9th centuries were localized in such favoured spots as Koyasan. But now a whole nation sat down at the feet of the Chinese Masters, poets, philosophers, artists and even calligraphists. The glory of the Sung, both Northern and Southern, became renewed in the glory of the Ashikaga Shogunate. But whereas Kyoto under Yoshimitsu and his successors was a radiating centre throughout the Empire, Hangchow under the Southern Sung appears as a solitary focus of light. And all around it the waters of Mongol darkness were extinguishing one by one its fortresses and cities till the fire-led dynasty itself vanished beneath the waves.

The art of life lies in the artless recognition of the wholeness of life. The moment you begin to talk

about ' Art for Art's sake ' or ' Art for Religion's sake ' you are beginning to separate that which is essential to life from life itself. Consequently it may be presumed that Art has a value of its own apart from all other earthly values.

The result is an artist who holds himself aloof from his fellows, or walks delicately amid the elect. It is as though a little constellation of stars had agreed to drop out of the firmament and found a more exclusive Heaven of its own. And the idea of Art for the sake of Religion is always qualified by the holder's particular outlook on religion. It is a Christian art, a Hindu, a Buddhist, or a Muhammedan art. It is bound by its tenets, its traditions of myth or history ; it is limited to the lives of its prophets, saints and martyrs and to their constricted views on life both here and hereafter. We may hold, and rightly hold, that religion is the very basis of art, of education, of politics, and even, as modern scientists have boldly affirmed, of science. But, after all, what do we mean by religion ? To many of us it is simply a vague feeling, a random and seldom-recurring aspiration after higher things than meat and drink and clothing. To many more it signifies the rites and ceremonies of a certain institution called a Church, through which our souls are passed on to Paradise and everlasting bliss, while our bodies moulder in its graveyards. Schiller's impromptu reply to a lady who asked him about his religion is worth remembering, even in its English doggerel form,—

' What thy religion ?

Those thou namest none.

None ! why ? Because I have Religion.'

And Mrs Grantham, who has studied deeply the many phases of Chinese life, repudiates the idea that the Chinese are lacking in religion :

‘ But assuredly the religious feeling is infinitely wider than any one of the many forms into which it crystallizes—is, in fact, nothing less than man’s whole orientation towards that which he cannot touch, yet is able to feel ; that which he cannot see, yet is able to realize ; that which he cannot hear, yet is able to answer ; that which he cannot understand, yet is allowed to interpret.’

Hui Tsung lost the Empire of the Northern Sung, not because he was an artist, but because he failed to adjust the artist to the Emperor. He lacked that very basis of religion on which all art is built, which never obtrudes nor appears above the surface and yet gives stability to the whole structure. A careless student of Taoism, he interpreted Lao Tzū’s doctrine of *Wu Wei* as doing nothing to interfere with the natural course of things. But he himself had a part, and as Emperor and consequently Father of his people, a very great part to play in the course of human affairs. He was the centre of nationhood, and from him light and leading and guidance should have radiated to all points of the Chinese circumference and even beyond. Instead, he shut off the light or rather focused it upon himself and his own little circle of artists and philosophers.

The galleries and museums, which in their turn should have been centres of influence and culture throughout the Empire, became the store-houses of a selfish collector and the pleasure-resorts of precious dilettanti, whose cult was art for Art’s sake. And



even as they sniffed the perfume of departed dynasties the stench of the unburied dead on countless battle-fields, mingled with the smoke of cities burning, rolled in across the shrinking frontiers and enveloped the imperial city of Pien Liang in a pall of doom.

The 'Crossing of the River,' as the flight of the Sung across the Yangtse is called, saved what remained of the old Chinese spirit for a century and a half. But the new Emperor Kao Tsung and those who followed him had learnt no lesson from the fate of the Northern dynasty. Chu Hsi, the last great scholar-statesman of a line that began with Confucius, was degraded and died in exile. Yo Fei, the last great general of the Sung, and the hero of his age, was done to death in prison. But if patriotism and statesmanship were sins, poetry and art were supreme virtues to be cultivated at Hangchow no matter what had befallen Pien Liang. Moreover, there was a spirit abroad differing profoundly from the T'ang spirit of leisurely enjoyment—a hurried, restless spirit that possesses those who fear to die before their work is finished. Life had never seemed so desirable and so fleeting as it did to the artist of Hangchow in the dawn of the 13th century. Painting and poetry and calligraphy—always an art in China,—combined together on one canvas. Buddhist priests, living far up the hill-slopes in their pine-shadowed temples, were among the finest landscape painters of the age. There were no sealed compartments keeping art and religion apart; Confucianism and Taoism melted into each other. The sun of Hangchow was at once the liberating energy and universal solvent of varying types of

mind ; a sense of unity brooded upon its moonlit waters ; its islands and green retreats were earthly counterparts of the Isles of the Blest.

But no one knew better than these old masters in the art of life that theirs was the end, and not the beginning, of a golden age dying with every sunset, passing with every twilight shiver among the willows, and the tolling of each vesper bell. It was the glamour of gardens fading on nightfall, the vision that mocked the pale realities of this world. At the end of an era in the West the Græco-Roman spirit of paganism asserted itself and *carpe diem* was the slogan of its literary and intellectual classes. The Englishman of to-day is never tired of telling you that ‘ things may last my time, and after me——?’ A shrug of the shoulders finishes the sentence. But the period of the later Sung is more than a haunting memory of lotus-eaters and their vanished paradise ; it is a shrine of inspiration and pilgrimage for the human race. The Court was corrupt, but the heart of the people was still sound. So Hangchow created that Kyoto might inherit and retain for the generations to come. Every stroke of the artist’s brush was swift, inevitable, and final, so that the passing moment might endure, and the time of the Sung stand still. And time that stands still is not time but Eternity.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE INTERPRETERS

MUSICIANS, painters and poets are the interpreters of life. In a recent article in the *Poetry Review*, Jean Gorely quotes the following passage from Emerson : ' I know not how it is that we need an interpreter, but the great majority of men seem to be minors, who have not yet come into possession of their own, or mutes, who cannot report the conversation they have had with Nature.'

The story of life-interpretation is the story of an endless struggle between the priest who monopolizes and stereotypes a revelation of divine truth and the poet who brings it into the world. The one seals what the other has unsealed. One, having the power of the keys, stalls and stables and confines ; the other leads out into sunlight and freedom from bondage of fear and ignorance, and, entrusting his message to his disciples, vanishes from their midst. Henceforth they in their turn become interpreters of the truth revealed to them. They are the inheritors of a legacy which, like all legacies, is not meant to be enjoyed in peace and comfort, but to be added to through years of toil and watchfulness and fostering care, so that the inheritance, made greater by their zeal, may be handed on to others. And in the centuries that follow them their original interpretation suffers a vital change and is reinterpreted in the light of the increasing experience of the

human soul and the wider range of human knowledge. No nation and no religion has escaped the dead hand of tradition. Man is a builder from Babel to Geneva, and every house he builds is a house of bondage, from the shell of personality which he trails about with him to the institution which shelters and warms his gregarious soul—his Church, his Club, his Council Chamber. And all are necessary by way of discipline and contrast. This personality thrown together, a composite of humility and pride, of ignorance and experience, of habits acquired, of acquiescence and rebellion, is at once the example of my need for discipline and the contrast to my other self that grows not by accretion but through inspiration. Through discipline we begin to learn the lesson of subordination, and subordination is the first step towards consistency. Through inspiration we take in that we may give out, for inspiration is the breath of the soul, by which it lives and gives life. As creators we brood over chaos, parting form from the formless and breathing into form the breath of life. And if we may accept Hsieh Ho's 'Rhythmic Vitality' as identical with the Hebrew Breath of Life, then every member of the body must enter into rhythmical relations with its neighbours and all act together as one. The institutions of men are places of discipline where we learn to conform to those around us, to submit to the admonition from the pulpit, to accept the party whip, to bow to the ruling from the chair. And if I believe in the greater Communion of Life, my first lesson was learnt in the communion of a small congregation ; my belief in the brotherhood of man has come to

me no less from my co-operation with others in politics and public life. Through variety I am led to unity, through the discipline of others to self-control. The House of Bondage is also the Anteroom of Freedom. Poets are essentially the apostles of freedom, but the freedom of which they dream is the freedom of ordered sequence and adjustment into the coherent and sustained harmonies. A fortuitous combination of chords and discords, of melodies that have no relation to each other, is not freedom but the anarchy of contending forces. And all the harmonies are combined and contained in the greater rhythm of life. There are harmonies of type both human and sub-human, and the rarer harmony of which Shakespeare speaks :

‘ There’s not the smallest orb that thou behold’st  
But in his motion like an angel sings,  
Still quiring to the young-eyed Cherubims ;  
Such harmony is in immortal souls. . . . ’

And in human life alone there are the harmonies of human associations, of nationhood and fellowships having a common tradition and a common object. But the rhythm of life is over all, and art is its expression. As Mr Binyon says :

‘ Art is not an adjunct to existence, a reduplication of the actual ; it is a hint and a promise of that perfect rhythm, of that ideal life. Whatever rhythm is, it is something intimately connected with life, perhaps the secret of life and its most perfect expression.’

It is intimately connected with motion, and may be defined as the ordered sequence of movements by which alone power is achieved. Of the arts which express it, Confucius attaches most importance to music. With him poetry is the accessory of music. Words were written to be sung, and it is of music that Confucius waxes eloquent. Here, indeed, we get the subtle point of contact between the northern and southern Chinese mind. Music brings them together. But the contact is only momentary. For Confucius enters with ceremonies and the two fall apart. The Master cannot speak about music without ceremonies.

As we have already seen, music was 'the expression of a common brotherhood through feelings which never change and all possess,' while 'ceremonies distinguish the things in which men differ.' So music becomes the borderland where the Confucianist adjusts his relations to others; where the Taoist adjusts his individual soul into harmony with all life. Certainly music is the most universal of all arts and the one that makes the most instant appeal to the emotions. It speaks a common language and has no need to suffer the metamorphosis of a foreign tongue. It requires no habitation, no ceremony of framing and hanging on the walls of public gallery or private collector; but the Universe is its home, and like water, there is nowhere that it may not penetrate. It expresses the accord of the Yin and the Yang, of Earth and Heaven, the Female and the Male principles, and as it surges through the heart of man it stirs the silent chords of the creative impulse to respond, and the endless renewal of creation begins again.

Okakura is speaking of the fabled harp of Lungmen when the hand of Peiwoh, the prince of harpists, caressed it :

‘ At the magic touch of the beautiful the secret chords of our being are awakened, we vibrate and thrill in response to its call. Mind speaks to mind. We listen to the unspoken, we gaze upon the unseen. The master calls forth notes we know not of. Memories long forgotten all come back to us with a new significance. Hopes stifled by fear, yearnings that we dare not recognise, stand forth in new glory. . . . *The masterpiece is of ourselves, as we are of the masterpiece.*’

This is the most significant thought of all, for it shows us our own significance as listeners. Without us there would be no masterpiece. Its greatness lies in its power to move us to appreciation, in its reaction upon ourselves as musicians and not mere hollow shells of echo and reverberation. And though we may neither play nor sing, through the power of music we shall create the harmonies of self-adjustment to the nature of the material on which we work, and the medium of our art, whether it be paint or words or what humbler medium we may use for the purposes of creation. According to the Chinese, the music of men must conform to the principles in Nature. Thus, as Van Aalst has pointed out in his book on Chinese Music :

‘ The ch’in (table-lute) measured 3.66 feet, because the Year contains a maximum of 366 days ; the number of the strings was five, to agree with the five elements ; the upper part was made round, to

represent the firmament ; the bottom was flat, to represent the ground ; and the thirteen studs stood for the twelve moons and the intercalary moon.'

In the *sê*, or 25-stringed psaltery, ' each string is elevated on a movable bridge. These bridges represent the five colours ; the first are blue, the next red, the five in the middle are yellow, then come five white, and lastly five black.' So it will be seen that music is based on religion, the ancient religion of Nature Worship, and linked up with the art of painting through form and colour.

Painting in its turn is connected with literature through the art of handwriting. From 200 B.C., when the writing-brush took the place of the ' knifepen,' words have been painted rather than written. And since there is no alphabet in the language, its place has been taken by ideographs which are themselves built up of simpler root-ideas. The pictorial element, though modified at a later date, still remains, while instead of the rigid script of the writer, to whom the written word is merely a vehicle for expression, we get the free brush-work of the artist. This art within an art culminates in the ' Hanging-on-the-Wall poems '—according to the Chinese, ' the most perfect medium in which a man can express himself. . . . A beautiful thought perpetuated in beautiful handwriting and hung upon the wall to suggest a mental picture.'

Through freedom to individuality was the way of the painter in the T'ang and Sung dynasties, influenced at first by Taoism and later by that profound Chinese modification of Buddhism called Zen. As yet, the schools and the copyists were



unknown in the world of art. They belonged solely to the realm of Confucian scholarship, where all things tended to become shell-hardened and stereotyped until Chu Hsi, with his magic touch, resolved them anew. The Confucian, entangled in human affairs, reduced the teaching of his Master to a barren system of ethics. Filial piety, which included, of course, his duty towards his immediate superiors and through them to the Emperor, and the performance of the ancestral rites, filled the whole of his mental horizon. But the symbol of the Taoist was the Dragon-Spirit of Cosmic Change, 'the eternal growth which returns upon itself to produce new forms.' Tang Yu, an artist under the first Sung Emperor, wrote a small book which he called *Painting Dragons*, from which Professor Giles gives the following significant extract: 'Painting a dragon involves the attainment of spirituality and vitality. Spirituality is, as it were, the mother, and vitality the child; and when spirituality summons vitality, as the mother summons her child, how can it dare not to come?'

To say for the human race that spirituality, which is the stir of God in man, is the mother of vitality, which is the stir of man towards creation and life-renewal, is to say no less. The mother bears and nourishes and watches over her child, but when she calls her, the daughter becomes aware of her own vitality and the purpose of her call. She has answered the summons to motherhood and in her turn she must create or be disowned. Thus the spirit of Tang Yu becomes the mother of the living dragon who soars among the gods, linking mortals with deity. And there are others who ride the

Chinese sky—the *hsien* or immortals, of whom Liu An has written :

‘ When they trod upon the hoar-frost or the snow they left no footprints ; when the rays of the sun fell upon them, they threw no shadow. They climbed aloft on spiral gusts of wind, they passed over hills and streams, treading in the air and soaring higher than the Kwan-lun Mountains, bursting open the Gate of Heaven, and entering the Palace of God.’

Then there are the Chên-jên, or Perfect Men, who roam from one world to another and have their dwelling among the stars ; the eighteen Lohans of Buddhism with haloes on their shaven crowns, long eyebrows and large ears, the Buddhist cloak, attached to one shoulder, streaming behind them as they pass.

There is the Cloud-Man,

‘ the mysterious wizard of the mountains and the winds, the grim ascetic who dreams upon a peak, motionless beneath the assault of the wild wind which twists his robe. His spirit is far freer, far wilder than the wind ; his burning eyes, indifferent to the tempest, are fixed upon the source of all life : he plunges into it : the exultation of infinite force uplifts him and bears him into boundless space, along the invisible ways of the air and of his will.’

And there are the Rishis ascending to the Mount of the Immortals to hold converse with the Masters who have attained from wisdom to rest, souls accorded with harmonies unheard by mortals ; and the Bodhisats descending from summits of eternal bliss, for love and pity, to mingle again in the entanglements of the human race. Yet even

the holy ones are not always proof against the snares of remembrance, and the lovely and alluring earth that glimmers beneath their trail. And so the fall of saintliness is set before us as a warning when Kume, the Rishi, beholding the white legs of a girl in the stream, topples headlong from the clouds into mortality. 'His supernatural power forsook him and down he toppled.' 'And yet,' muses Kenko, 'I own it not illogical.'

The Chinese sky is one vast mirror reflecting the movement of thought and dream, vision and aspiration, and the strange adventures of human skyfarers among the constellations. Yet all is freedom and fluidity, all melt into one another as the five cardinal colours melt in the rainbow plumage of the Phoenix, as the male and female are united in the *K'i-lin* or Unicorn. And Lung, the Dragon, is their chief, for he alone is the embodiment of the Law of Becoming and divine transmutation from new to old and old to new. Only the tiger, which is the symbol of savagery and animal lust, roams the earth that hems him round, and from its confines roars his challenge to the spiritual powers.

The Christian saint and mystic, the Christian artist and poet, lifting their eyes to the heavens, beheld them open and saw angels, who were spiritual beings yet in the likeness of men with the wings of birds, descending as God's messengers to earth. Again, they saw the prophets and law-givers and the apostles seated on clouds in the presence of their Maker, the Ancient of Days. Or, differing from the Jews whose vision of a future state was always a dream of this earth renewed and remade

for man, they transferred the New Jerusalem, which St John saw 'coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband,' to the skies. God Himself is no longer Jehovah, 'He who falls,' whether in wrath upon His enemies or to alight in fire and splendour upon Mount Sinai, but a God of love and pity whose Supreme Messenger of good tidings returns with the souls of the faithful, who through Him are drawn up into the presence of their Heavenly Father.

But the Chinese sky is the realm of pure myth rather than mythological fancy, and pure myth is always symbolical. The Dragon, the Unicorn, the Phoenix, are not animal-gods, like those of the Egyptians, but symbols of divine power which is man's to use if he will and dare. Truth is outlined through images that suggest rather than explain. 'A leaning towards explanations of a teleological kind,' says Mr Frank Baker, 'is but rarely compatible with profundity of thought.' In distinction from the Western spirit of over-elaboration, the desire to explain, to fill in details until nothing is left to the imagination, the philosophy, art and literature of the Far East stops short and allows its audience to continue for itself. As Mr Werner has pointed out, 'the problem (of mythology) is of course a psychological one, for it is in imagination that myths have their roots.'

But in taking the author's definition of mythology as 'the science of the unscientific man's explanation of what we call the Otherworld,' we shall have to note that the imagination of the Chinese myth-maker is not to be found in the Confucian but in the Taoist element, supplemented later by Buddhism

from without. And philosophical Taoism, which must not be confused with its popular development into geomancy and magic, is not an explanatory doctrine of what to believe, but a suggestion of how to live in harmony with the great environment of life. Lao Tzŭ and Chuang Tzŭ are poets rather than theologians and doctrinaires. Ultimately the broad channel of Taoism, which might have been the main spiritual force of the Chinese people, is broken on the rock of Confucian opposition and split into two streams. One loses itself in art and literature, the other in superstition. The progress of the Chinese myth is ended, but the stream itself has become bright with flowers mirrored along its banks. Islands arise shadowed by leaning mulberries, and in the pictures of the Sung and their Ming copyists we see the pavilions of poets descending to the water's edge and their boats awaiting them. The great cities of the golden age—Lo-yang, Ch'ang-an, Pien Liang, Nan King and Hangchow—are all cities of Taoist creative artists and not Confucian utilitarians. Space and water, freedom and fluidity—these are cardinal tenets of Taoism, and all their cities were built to correspond with these essentials. Houses were no excrescences on the landscape, their graceful curves were not made to dominate but to harmonize with natural surroundings. The square solidity and rigid outline of Western architecture is nowhere to be found in the East. The house itself makes no claim to permanence; it is the symbol of the passing soul finding its habitation for a while. But there is space around it, and the beauty of growth, flower and tree within its demesne. 'Though Loh Kwei

Mong lives within the limits of a bustling city, his house is surrounded with the rustic atmosphere of a village.'

The cities of China were garden cities differing from our idea of a garden city in one respect, that, whereas we should look on space as the one essential, to the Chinese the fluidity of water was of no less importance. The two requisites of a Chinese garden are the world in miniature composed of rocks and hillocks covered with dwarf trees to resemble wooded hills and channels spanned by arched bridges, and beyond them the groves and pleached alleys that melt imperceptibly into the landscape. Their flower-beds are often set not on land but on water, where the lotus rise with their 'many petaled, purple, chalice-like flowers,' which in autumn are scattered and drift away like tiny boats. Yet there are flowers on land as well, tended with infinite care, from the white-and-yellow narcissus of the New Year to the last chrysanthemum lingering into winter. And from the twilight of a Chinese garden floats the perfume of white tuberose and Yulan lily trees whose pale young blooms are embroidering the old velvet dusk. There is no sound from the Spring Pavilion that overlooks the lotus pool where a solitary figure limned against the dim veranda fades slowly into the darkness that enfolds him. But the eyes of the watcher have seen, and in his recording heart the illuminated scroll of hours lies open and unfinished. He is a Chinese poet, and therefore the interpreter of the eternal moment in which he has rested. He has stood still with time, halted upon the threshold between night and day. In the rare moments

when personality is stripped as a garment, and nationality is dissolved as a mist, nothing of variety of form or type remains, only the sense of Being, of unity and cessation from the strife and pain of Becoming, and the ending of adventure in the achievement of the quest.

This is the Nirvana of the poets, not merely of the Chinese poets, but of all who have returned to rest in the very depths of Being.

‘Hearken unto this, O Job : stand still, and consider the wondrous works of God.’

It is the moment when the Creator has speech with His image apart. The soul that He fashioned in His likeness, to adventure in the world of phenomena and create according to its power, has paused to consider the acts of creation and wondrous workmanship of the Supreme Artist. And God questions His image :

‘Dost thou know the balancings of the clouds, the wondrous works of him which is perfect in knowledge ?

‘How thy garments are warm, when he quieteth the earth by the south wind ?

‘Hast thou with him spread out the sky, which is strong, and as a molten looking glass ?’

And the image answers Him, not directly, but by prayer to the incoming breath of life which is inspiration :

‘Teach us what we shall say unto him ; for we cannot order our speech by reason of darkness.

‘Shall it be told him that I speak ? if a man speak, surely he shall be swallowed up.’

This is not the hour for speech but for the silent intercourse between the soul and the breath of life, which is also the messenger between creator and created. The hour of inspiration is also the hour of God's re-creation, His replenishment and renewal of His creatures. The form in which the Hebrew poem is embodied differs widely from the form of Chinese poetry, but the essential thought is the same. Chinese poets are more impersonal in their treatment. They do not use the word God, with its implications of human form and attributes, and even sex. No personal pronoun will suffice for that which is impersonal yet all-containing. For them the Power behind the Universe is suggested by the symbol Tao, and Tao itself cannot be expressed in words. Give it a name, that is, attempt to define its relation to the world in which we live, and it becomes 'the Mother of all things.' For God the Father, God the engenderer of the Hebrews, the Chinese read God the Mother, God the Producer of life. And the great theme of life is Polarity, of opposites, of attraction and repulsion from atoms to organisms, of matter and spirit, the *Yin* and the *Yang*. 'Let there be light !' Instantly the peace of God is broken by the polarization of light, by refraction and vibration, and life is engendered upon the troubled waters, a composite of light and primal darkness, fire and water. The vital principle is the result of the conflict or rather interplay of opposites. 'Sex,' says Mr Frank Baker, 'is the embodiment of vitality ; the Sexual is the vital and the vital the sexual ; wherever there is life, there Priapus flaunts his royal nudity.'

From the beginning of their philosophy the



Chinese have recognized this apparent duality and conflict, but they have also sensed the unity that underlies all differences and varieties. And for them type and species are not separate themes but merely variations of the one great theme. As musicians in the orchestra they have their place with the trees and birds and the streams, and the waves drumming along the shore, and the winds that blow all notes of the world-scale from forest bass to mountain treble. Their music is not the music of man alone, for they have tuned in with the Universal, interpreting all things through music. Truly we need an interpreter, and it is the poet who solves the problem. For this reason he is the representative man. Because of deep insight and a corresponding power of expression, 'he stands among partial men for the complete man.' He is nearest to the centre of the Universe, and sees all things in their relation to the Infinite and to each other.

'The factory, village and railway fall within the great Order not less than the beehive or the spider's geometrical web. He perceives that thought is multiform; that within the form of every creature is a force impelling it to ascend into a higher form; and following with his eyes the life, uses the forms which express that life, and so his speech flows with the flowing of Nature. The life may be likened to a light with its rays shining in all men. Ordinarily it is not tended and burns but dimly. Then men must resort to reason. But the poet frees it from all obstruction. It has a brighter flame, and things appear in their true relations. His report or expression is poetry.'<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 'Emerson's Theory of Poetry,' by Jean Gorely, *The Poetry Review*, July 1931.

In dealing with the foundations of Chinese poetry, certain facts will have to be noted :

That the great majority of the poets themselves were officials of the State, from mere provincial magistrates to Viceroys of great provinces.

That official rank was only obtainable through literary examination.

That the curriculum included the Confucian classics and the collection of national ballads known as the Shih-King or Book of Odes.

That the prevailing influence at the Courts of both T'ang and Sung dynasties was largely Taoist, and by imperial rescript the Taoist classics, especially Lao Tzŭ and Chuang Tzŭ, were commended for study. A young man of literary and artistic talent, as apart from a mere scholar and acceptor of ancient conventions and ceremonial, would undoubtedly be attracted more by the freer movement and greater beauty of thought in the Taoist writers than the colder ethics of the Confucians and their insistence on shackling the present to the past.

We may therefore view them as men of the world accustomed to administration and the responsibilities of public affairs, and as poets whose early education and training had been on literary and philosophic lines. In other words, they were citizens of both worlds, the actual and the ideal, and therefore whole men understanding life as a whole in accordance with the conceptions of their age. But they rarely allowed their philosophy to obtrude ; it is there, but it is implicit in their poems and seldom rises to the surface. It is not their business to pose as philosophers, but rather to suggest the underlying unity of man with Nature and both with

Tao. And whatever may be said of their poetry is equally true of all their art, for the spirit of Chinese art is one and indivisible. 'Is man,' asks Mr Laurence Binyon, 'the centre and the lord of the living universe?' With one voice the artists of the Far East have answered, 'He is but one among a million.'

Since the feminine symbol of life is water and the fluidity of water, even as the masculine is that of fire, there is nowhere that life cannot penetrate and interpenetrate. Make of your soul a channel and the living water will find its level therein. The Chinese quest of art was the quest of life for life, not beauty but vitality. For with them beauty was but one aspect of the eternal manifest in phenomena. Found in the tiniest flower, in form it is seldom more than shoulder high with man. The great landscape soars away from beauty into grandeur, the mountain peaks are clouded with mystery that belongs to the borderland of earth and Heaven. The pine tree was beautiful in its slender youth; in its age, buffeted and distorted by the winds, lashed by the rains, it becomes a symbol of persistence and endurance; it is the Prometheus of the tree-world defying the jealousy and rage of elemental forces. The old is the venerable, to be approached with reverence; the oldest is the most venerable, to be approached with awe.

And there is no vitality without divinity, without some trace of the deity in His handiwork. Speaking of the Ashikaga age in which Sesshu and his disciples flourished, Mr Yone Noguchi says of them:

'Their artistic work was a sort of prayer-making, to satisfy their own imagination, not a thing to show

to a critic whose attempt at arguing and denying is only a nuisance in the world of higher art; they drew pictures to create absolute beauty and grandeur, that made their own human world look almost trifling, and directly joined themselves with eternity. Art for them was not a question of mere reality in expression, but a question of Faith. Therefore they never troubled their minds with the matter of subjects or the size of the canvas; indeed, the mere reality of the external world had ceased to be a standard for them, who lived in the temple studios.'

Laurence Binyon has said of their outlook: 'Hints of the divine were to be found everywhere—in leaves of grass, in the life of animals, birds, and insects. No occupation was too humble or menial to be invested with beauty and significance.'

The faith of which the author is speaking is no mere acceptance of traditions imposed by any hierarchy of Buddhist priests, but the profounder and yet simpler faith in themselves as in God and God in them. And in the presence of such a faith criticism is less than impertinence; it is just the buzzing of a fly across the peace of noon.

The spirit of Sesshu was a world-spirit that took tribute from birds and animals, from men and their myths; to whom no order of creation was negligible. In a single lifetime he re-created the lost dream of the Sungs in wonder and beauty and delight. From the nerveless hands of Ming scholars he wrested the secrets of the earthly Paradise fading from Hangchow; he packed an Empire, with its cities and the green shadowed waters on which they smiled, and sailed for Japan, the founder of a new dynasty in the realms of art.

But Sesshu was no copyist of the past, and all his treasure plundered from Ming court and monastery he transmuted and transformed in the light of his own indomitable genius. Eminent critics have found fault with his harshness of spirit, and there is justice in Fenellosa's comment that 'Sesshu's line, even where, as in its large Buddhist images, it aims at Ririomin's grandeur and modulation of flow, almost brutally hacks the traditions and sinuosities into unrelated shivers and passionate scratches.' He is 'over-masculine ; even perhaps as Rembrandt is over-masculine.'

Yet we should remember that Sesshu had a definite part to play in the history of Oriental art. He is a type of the endless interplay of action and reaction. He found the dragon of change recumbent upon his coils, and stabbed him straight, using his brush as a sword. He stormed the Imperial city of Nanking and looted with rare discrimination their priceless inheritance of Sung art from its bloodless curators. He came upon a complacent world flickering into femininity, and what he took from it he possessed as the Khans of Tartary possessed the harems of the vanquished. And on his return to Japan men, not mimes, became his disciples and successors. The flower of young Japanese manhood sat at his feet, and his words were to them like the rescripts and decrees of Majesty.

But, again, we should be careful in judging or belittling the service of Sesshu to his age. We may accept as a truism the ideal of art as bi-sexual, containing in itself the masculine element of fire and the feminine of water, from which all life originated. We may agree with Fenellosa that 'in the more

delicate, internal and infinitely subtle balances of taste lies a more spiritual strength of tissue that Sesshu lacks,' that 'Where informing essence penetrates to the very finger tips, strength does not lower but completes itself through grace.' Sesshu was lacking in grace. But if we, using the gift of historical imagination, were to put ourselves back into his time and place we would find the scales of perfect balance weighed down, rusted from disuse, and fixed with a load of femininity. Sesshu set them in motion, and, seating himself on the empty space, the *Yang* sank down, the *Yin* rose up. All art is a matter of balance and adjustment—

'The little more and how much it is !

The little less and what worlds away !'

But it is something, and more than something, to have set the rigid scales in motion, to have begun once more the endless movement and the battle of the balance. Never again in the history of Japanese art, as it is written up to the present day, shall we meet with a more vital soul. The Kano school that follows him keeps a more perfect balance, but with lesser forces contending. The stark individualism of the earlier Tosa school of native Japanese art is absorbed into the Chinese universalism of the Kano when, early in the 16th century, Tosa Mitsuhisa, daughter of the Tosa patriarch, marries Kano Motonobu. But the union of man and woman in marriage is very different in result from the absorption of one school by another, especially when the one is a waning and the other a rising influence. Little was added to the Kano by the extinction of the Tosa, except perhaps a certain

influx of vitality which the snake receives when it swallows the rabbit.

The balance of two forces, equal or nearly equal, striving in rivalry and emulation is essential from the creative point of view. Each acts upon the other and reacts to its opponent's pressure. The revival of Taoism under the Sungs was the cause of a corresponding revival in Confucianism. Chu Hsi infused a deeper meaning into the ancient classics, he set the silting stream in motion, and the waters brought fertility to a barren soil. When Confucianism finally triumphed, as we have already noted, the great impetus of the Chinese spirit flagged, and from the time of the Mings to the present day the story of China is the story of stagnation. The real lessons of history are to be found in the contribution of one people after another—not to their own comfort or aggrandisement—but to the human cause which, from the beginning, the Creative Spirit has made its own.

The contribution of China to the cause of man is to be sought in the profound recognition by her artists of the divinity latent in all environment, the secret life which awaits the discovery of adventurers in harmony. All things are set in motion, and without motion the world would dissolve and the Heavens fall. But motion itself must be ordered and obedient to the law. The motion of one body must be adjusted to that of another. That is why, as Havelock Ellis points out, 'the art of dancing stands at the source of all the arts that express themselves first, in the human person.' The dance of the atoms is the building dance of the Universe, and all the arts we know are based thereon.

‘The significance of dancing, in the wide sense, thus lies in the fact that it is simply an intimate concrete appeal of a general rhythm, that general rhythm which marks not life only but the universe, if one may still be allowed so to name the sum of cosmic influences that reach us.’

No nation has ever entered more fully into life than the Chinese at its zenith. But its inheritance was due not to any conquest or attempt to dominate and subdue life for the utilitarian purposes of man, through analysis and direction, but through unity and the power of rhythmical apprehension. Through rhythm the Chinese artist vitalized even the inorganic. ‘His bronzes, his pottery, his enamels seem literally to be the product of a living force hidden within them, and their surface acquires a capital importance, for it is a sign, a flowering of an inner life distinct in its kind.’ The first principle of Chinese art is that of Rhythmic Vitality expressed in the movement of life. This is no more than saying that the dance is expressed through music. Our contact with the dance of Creation is made through music ; and through vibration, which is the movement of a chord, we enter and coalesce with the single vibration of the myriad-chorded Universe. We have become life-conscious through death, for death is the merging of the lesser in the greater, the surrender of self in personality, the renunciation of our exclusive human ties, to be born again as children and citizens of the Cosmos. And as we pass from living to doing we find death awaiting us once more. For

‘the Artist, through an act of Renunciation, a bending of the Will upon itself, rejects or sub-



ordinates his immediate being, which dies within him ; but his Spirit, whose sole essence lies in its immortality, is by a like sign subject to a tragic metempsychosis ; whereby it passes to the creatures of his Mind and Senses, yielding to them his breath and conferring his life upon them ; his weakness is their strength, he perishes in order that they may survive.

‘ *Mors janua vitæ !* ’

Life as we see it is broken by the flash of a single second cleaving the past from the future. We speak of Now as denoting the Present, but even as we speak, Now has vanished into Then. Thus Now becomes the endless death in life. Throughout the East wisdom has anticipated death by learning to live in the Eternal Now. This is the true meaning of Rest. For the rest of the Sage, as Chuang Tzū points out, is not what the world calls rest. His rest is the result of a state of mind. He compares the mind of the Sage with the stillness which gives the accuracy of the water-level. ‘ And if water derives lucidity from stillness, how much more the faculties of the mind ! The mind of the Sage, being in repose, becomes the mirror of the universe, the speculum of all creation.’ Thus if we would know life in all its aspects and activities, in its wholeness, we must rest in death, which for us who still make our appearance in the world of time and space means the suspension of becoming and entry into a state of being. We are raised to a mental plane of ecstasy known to the Buddhists as *Samadhi*, which ‘ beginning with the trance of super-consciousness, produced by meditation,’ culminates ‘ in a perfect union with the Absolute, which is compatible

with work in the world, and is the same as Buddhahood.'

It is not our purpose in a book dealing with the art ideals of the Far East to plunge into the depths of Chinese and Japanese Buddhism. But though we may not go so far as to accept the dictum of a Chinese commentator that poetry is designed to raise the reader to a state of Samadhi, we cannot ignore the fact that poetry is the outcome of a state of mental ecstasy.

'It was Emerson's belief,' writes Mrs Gorely in her article quoted above, 'that thought comes from "the inner mind," the "mind of the mind," and brings with it the power of expression. At the time of its reception the poet is inspired. . . . Inspiration is inconsecutive. There is a flash, a "point of view," a "glimpse," a "mood," and no more. Nor can it be controlled in any way. It comes spontaneously. When we discern truth, we do nothing of ourselves, but allow a passage to its beams. *The poet can neither incite nor prolong it*, but he can clear away obstruction. . . . He does not revert to the past or look to the future, but "lives now and absorbs past and future into the present hour."'

In this latter phase *Samadhi* and the poetic ecstasy are at one. But can we say truthfully of any great poet that he has no power to incite or prolong his state of ecstasy? It is certainly not true of a Nature poet like Wordsworth, whose mental plane was attained by deliberate contemplation. For him the external features of a landscape are not in themselves the things that count, but the spirit that abides behind them. And the same

applies to the poets and painters of the Far East. Of Kuo Hsi, the great art critic of the Sung, M. Hovelague says : ' You will see that in his eyes spirit is everything ; in all things it is the invisible spirit within them which must be set free and expressed, and not their visible reality.'

Drawing, composition, design, colour scheme, and in the case of poetry metre, rhyme, word values are merely adjuncts to the essential thought. And the thought itself is intuitive and not rational, whilst intuition comes not haphazard but as the result of profound contemplation, like the lightning flash following the solemn roll of the brooding clouds across the hilltop. Intuition has nothing to do with morals or ethics, which change with a changing world ; it is but a momentary revelation of the invisible to the sensitive mind, impressing itself so that it may be expressed by the seer. In its simplest Anglo-Saxon form it is *insight* and as such belongs to the spiritual world. Any manifestation of things seen by insight is drawn to the surface by creative activity.

' Hearken unto this, O Job : stand still and consider the wondrous works of God.' In stillness, which is the rest of the soul from earthly encounter and the clamouring insistence of human affairs, insight is born. God reveals Himself in the lightning flash and His voice is heard in the thunder. Then comes the liberated rain stored in the secret reservoirs, replenished and brimming in stillness, liberating in turn through the channels of growth. This doctrine of *Wu Wei*—rendered by scholars as ' Inaction,' ' Doing and Nothing,' ' Passivity,' which Dr Mears, with deeper insight into the

essence of Tao, translates 'Striving through the power of the Inner Life'—lies at the root of all Chinese art and literature. This is not to say that the Masters themselves were all conscious Taoists applying the methods and doctrines of Lao Tzū through the brush of poet or painter. Nothing is further from the truth. There are few purely Taoist poets, and Ssu Kung Tu is a rare exception to the golden rule of silence, the sacred silence of the heart. They do not preach, and 'any manifestation of things seen by insight' is clothed by them in flesh and blood—the flesh of mountains and the blood of water. 'Mountains make water their blood ; grass and trees their hair, mist and cloud their divine colouring. Water makes of mountains its face, of houses and fences its eyebrows and its eyes, and of fishermen its soul.'

All the gospel of unending joy and life more abundant wells from them unconsciously. What has transpired between Creator and created cannot be revealed by any man. It is but suggested through rhythm and apprehended in outline, in form and colour when vitality glows through all these. The gift of the Chinese nation at its zenith to the future was the gift of vitality through art. Its interpreters were interpreters of life and not of theory about life. They were citizens of this world, and as administrators, magistrates and even soldiers they played the part of men in public affairs. But the life from which they drew their power of evoking life, of calling the dreaming forces of Nature from their enchanted sleep, remains hidden from the eyes of the world. It is not for Art to reveal its Whence ; the secret of its magic belongs to religion.

Yet those who care to go deeper into the sources of human inspiration may find something to guide them in the following passage taken from an ancient Taoist text :

‘ The essence of the perfect Tao is solitude and silence ; the highest point of the perfect Tao, its further pole, is secrecy and silence ; *there*, where is neither sight nor sound, where the spirit is centered in absolute peace ; where, *sans* effort from within or movement from without, calm complete and perfect purity are Kings ; where the spiritual essence dies not and dims not ; where thought irradiates to its fullest splendour and the hidden life puts forth its flowers ; where I—the strength within, close-shrined from all externals, all apprehensive, compact of wisdom and intimate power—know how to guard the self of self and secure the harmony of all my being.’

## CHAPTER X

### THE FLOWER OF LIFE

*Art is the Flower of Life.*—FRANK BAKER, in *Myth, Nature and Individual*.

ARTISTS are the interpreters of living through the joy of creative activity, from the children at play on the sands to the painter absorbed in the transmutations of an autumn twilight. They give us the one unassailable reason for our existence—as creators. But Art itself is the Flower of Life, and every work of art is its symbol. The Artist does not interpret the flower, but himself as creator of all the flowers in the garden of Eden of which we dream. The blossom is Nature at its very zenith ; then comes the fall of the petal, the formation of the fruit which is the guardian of the seed, again the fall and dissolution liberating the seed to germinate in the darkness and the womb of earth. But beauty in colour and perfume is an appeal for pollination, without which no fruit is born. The structure of the living organism is adapted for purposes of fertilization, and the ultimate aim of the plant through stamen and pistil, stigma and anther is the persistence of type through fertility. Life quickens from the contact of ovule and pollen, and the long process of creation begins again. ‘ Come drink my nectar and bear my burden ’ is the challenge of the flower to those who bear

wings. For in the heart of every man there is a hidden garden with its potentialities of flower and fruit and seed, of roses and bellbine, ordered growth or rampant tangle. And our perceptions are winged to roam and penetrate as bees and return dusty with the pollen of other gardens to re-create our own. From perception to expression, which is the flowering of art, we wander and work. Through perception the artist adventures like the bee in search of nectar. Yet in this he differs from the insect that he plunders for himself and has no communal object to achieve on behalf of the hive. For him the nectar of his quest is the wine of communion with beauty which causes him

‘To see the World in a grain of sand  
And a Heaven in a wild-flower,  
Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand,  
And Eternity in an hour.’

This is a state of mind which is known to every Sufi of the Muhammedan world, and every Chinese artist. Because he has reached this state he is inspired, for inspiration only comes when he has passed beyond the realm of the sensuous and entered the realm of life untrammelled by form. From Form to Image, Image to Idea he passes. And although the return from perception to expression is a return to form, and the artist consciously expresses with his brush what he has seen, he has transcribed nothing and transmuted everything.

The artists of the T'ang and the Sung touch nothing that they do not transmute. They live in a world of Idea—the Idea of Life—and for them the purpose of Art is to bring Idea into contact

with Form. But the purpose they serve is greater than they are aware of. Unconsciously they have brought down to earth the pollen of immortality not only for themselves but for the generations to come. Every picture, every poem contains countless microspores or pollen grains rifled by its creator from the intimate heart of beauty.

And there are other factors in the pollination of ideas, corresponding to the influence of water and wind through the vegetable world. The flow of thought and the breath of inspiration are never still. In waves of rhythm thought flows eternally and the seeds of life are borne on its surface, while the wind, which is the breath of life, blows from the living work of art the living dust that falls on barren and fertile places alike, as the rain falls upon the just and unjust. What we receive or reject depends upon ourselves, our moods and states of receptivity. For we ourselves contain a world with all its possibilities of flower and fruit and germinating seed. And this idea of endless fertilization, of action and reaction in the mental and spiritual world is of the utmost importance when we consider the origins of Chinese philosophy and art. It is to be found in the very beginning of their sacred literature in the Book of Changes or Yih King, where the 'two Regulating Powers' which represent the male and female parts of the Universe are 'assimilated respectively by the fructifying heaven and the earth which it fructifies.'

Human art, then, is a matter of birth and growth, and neither can be forced. The artist has the wings of a bird. Freedom and movement are essential to him, and the Chinese artists were wanderers at all



times when they could throw off the shackles of routine and the restraints of public affairs. As universal lovers they had need of wings, and if we would follow the flight of their song we cannot do better than take Su K'ung T'u as our guide :

' I revel in flowers without let,  
An atom at random in space ;  
My soul dwells in regions ethereal,  
And the world is my dreaming-place.

' As the tops of the ocean I tower,  
As the winds of the air spreading wide ;  
I am 'stablished in might and dominion and power  
With the Universe ranged at my side.

' Before me the sun, moon, and stars,  
Behind me the phoenix doth clang ;  
In the morning I lash my leviathans,  
And I bathe my feet in Fusang.'

Yet with all this endless unrest, this urge on the trackless realms of adventure, and a range that widens across the highway of the sun, they have the stillness of a garden in their hearts. When lightly they have dropped to earth they become quiescent as the surroundings hills, indistinguishable from the radiant fellowships that star green slopes and valleys, open to the four world-seasons, the two controlling lights of Heaven, and the elemental winds that roam between. The artist must place himself in communion with his hills and with his streams. In all humility he must 'realise his true place in the Universe' by emptying his heart of its human pride and exclusiveness and admitting the flow of life from the non-human world around him. Lastly, he must wait upon the inevitable

moment when the seed is blown to fall and fructify. Patience is the supreme test of the Chinese artist, he is patient as Nature with which he is identified is patient, forcing nothing, anticipating nothing, abiding the hour of consummation.

‘ For our taste, used as we are to the operatic in poetry, the substance of Chinese poems seems often mild and trivial, but if we will be honest with ourselves and with our appreciation of what is lastingly important, we shall find these very same poems to be momentous details in the immense patience of beauty. They are the heart of an intimate letter.’

Mr Witter Bynner, in one revealing sentence, has summed up the appeal of Chinese poetry. For all the Italian asides that enjoin us to beat and blow, for the shrill soprano notes and the booming of baritones, and the long-drawn-out tremolos we may wait in vain. This ‘ immense patience of beauty,’ this ‘ heart of an intimate letter ’—what appeal will they make to an age of journalism and publicity? Is not patience the last virtue that a modern generation would acclaim? This is an age of short cuts ; so, to arrive at the lower slopes of the Jade Mountain we charge bull-headed through all obstacles that intervene between us and the joy of the turf no other hoof has pawed. As for the summit, who knows or cares if we attain it? since neither Snort, who stands for so much democracy, nor Sniff, who embodies so much literary criticism, has either head or wind for heights.

But that is not the way of the Chinese poets, nor is it the way of Witter Bynner. They need not

climb to conquest, though climb they will, for both they and he are great adventurers. But they had other means of enjoying eternally the summits of their desire, means that Muhammed never knew. They made room for all things within themselves, and so the unconscious hills moved in, or rather were caught in a vacuum. There are so many cherished notions about Nature in general and mountains in particular that have to be jettisoned before we can have our way with a single hillock. Especially is this the case with regard to man's place in Nature. In the West it is Man with a large capital, and nature with a small capital. There is neither affinity nor kinship between this nature and Man. It is simply the insentient background provided by a gracious Providence for our ineffable selves. Only here and there does a Western poet adjust himself to the universal through Nature. Mr Laurence Binyon, in his delightful little classic of Eastern ideals, *The Flight of the Dragon*; M. Emile Hovelague in *China*, and now Mr Witter Bynner have watched the Jade Mountain produce one Western poet—Wordsworth. But Mr Bynner is careful to add the necessary qualification by pointing out that the poetry of the Chinese 'cleaves even nearer to Nature than his. They perform the miracle of identifying the wonder of beauty with common sense. Rather, they prove that the simplest common sense, the most salutary, and the most nearly universal, is the sense of the beauty of Nature, quickened and yet sobered by the wistful warmth of human friendship.'

This brings us to the second part of his most pregnant sentence—'the heart of an intimate

letter.' Other writers, notably Mr Arthur Waley, have stressed the important part played by friendship in Chinese poetry. Indeed, many of these poems are intimate letters between friends. They are leaves set drifting down the stream, petals blown in the wind, a fall of flowers round the pillow of a dreamer. Beauty must be shared in the fellowship of beauty, there is no revelation without communion, so, bowed in spirit, we taste and pass the cup that contains the Universe to our nearest. Friendship, in the East, is a transcendent word, since it is hallowed by the communion of things shared, unpurchasable things, walks into the sunset, adventures beyond the moon. Here, where the standard of friendship is still the money standard, the wealthy man may only ring the bell of his approximate equal in worldly goods, the poorer man must knock at the door of his neighbour in villadom. But in the East, where values were eternal and incalculable, the millionaire of nights and days embarked to meet his friend in a shallop of silver dreams, and the waters were jewelled in his wake. Meeting, parting, returning—these are favourite themes with the Chinese poets. But after all—light following upon darkness, dawn on dusk, and the four seasons each in its turn—this is life, and the sequence thereof. And

' Only to wanderers can come  
Ever new the shock of beauty,  
Of white cloud and red cloud dawning from the sea,  
Of Spring in the wild-plum and river-willow. . . '

Yet, when they are shared, these beauties of floating colour and unfolding flower are enhanced ; when

thought unites with thought and melts into the cosmic dream of a thousand that are one. The artist is the sown and the sower, but the fertility of all he sows depends upon the germ of inspiration that vitalizes. Where there is no inspiration there is no harvest. The eventful hour comes floating in with its freight of pollen, and a friendly wind which scatters the largesse of summer with lavish hand. It is the wind of inspiration that passes and is gone. But the heart that is used aright will retain here and there one from a myriad grains of fertile dust, and from a moment's glimpse of immortality the immortal moment will abide.

' I wonder why my inlaid harp has fifty strings,  
 Each with its flower-like fret and interval of youth ?  
 . . . The sage Chuang Tzū is day-dreaming bewitched by  
 butterflies,  
 The Spring-heart of Emperor Wang is crying in a cuckoo,  
 Mermen weep their pearly tears down a moon-green sea,  
 Blue fields are breathing their jade to the sun,  
 And a moment that ought to have lasted for ever  
 Has come and gone before I knew.'

Somewhere in the latter half of the 18th century one who signed himself ' A Retired Scholar at the Lotus Pool ' made this anthology of moments that will last for ever, or as long as poetry endures. The sunset goes out and yet lingers in the memory of those who are privileged to watch its passing, when

' From the temple, deep in its tender bamboos  
 Comes the low sound of an evening bell,  
 While the hat of a pilgrim carries the sunset  
 Farther and far-ther down the green mountain.'

The poets who belong to 'The Jade Mountain' are all contemporaries of the T'ang dynasty. Li Po and Tu Fu have always been acclaimed by the Chinese themselves as their two greatest poets, and Western criticism is inclined, not without reason, to award the foremost place to the latter.

All through life Tu Fu was a wanderer, on foot, on horseback, or sailing along great rivers and wide waters ; a little while at Court, a long while in exile ; the guest of governors, of magistrates and retired scholars, a world-spirit to whom wife and children and home meant but a few sorrowful lines of parting, some rapturous chords of return.

'My lifelong I have found inspiration in lonely places ;  
I care not how far my horse's hoofs must travel.'

All the Chinese poets, with the exception of a few Taoist anchorites, were wanderers when the opportunity came to them. Their affinity in this respect with the Celtic bards of Wales is remarkable. But it was no common curiosity of the tourist that drove Taliesin across the Welsh hills or sent Tu Fu adventuring through 'the Nine Provinces,' but a veritable urge. They sought, but what was the object of their seeking ? Nothing of deliberation, unconsciously everything,

'To grasp ten thousand and secure One.'

Identification is the secret and seldom-mentioned goal.

'Taliesin,' says Mr Laurence Binyon, 'identifies himself, as he sings, with the intangible, the invisible ; with the wind that symbolizes the mystery of the world. He does not invoke the power of the

wind to turn the sails of a mill, or to blow the sails of a ship, or even, like Kalidasa, the Indian poet, to carry a cloud with a message to his love. He does not consider the wind in relation to the works of man, but as a kind of spirit with a strange life of its own.'

So Tu Fu identifies himself with the spirit of Lake Mei, or with 'The Little Rain' representing the fertile powers of Heaven that charm the sullen world into Spring :

' Oh ! she is good—the little rain. And well she knows our  
need,  
Who cometh in the time of Spring to aid the sun-drawn  
seed.  
She wanders with a friendly wind through silent nights  
unseen,  
The furrows feel her happy tears, and lo ! the land is green.'

In dealing with the elemental forces of earth—air, fire and water—the Chinese relate them to life. . . . They are the carriers of the living dust and the distillers of the Elixir of Immortality. But East and West part company when the purpose of life other than human is considered, even as Taliesin of the older faith parts company with Taliesin the Christian. For Christianity, through its Hebrew derivation, sees in man the centre of the Universe for whom all things are made. Thus he sings :

' The multitude of creatures which the earth nourishes,  
God made for man, with a view to enrich him ;  
Some are violent, some are mute, he enjoys them,  
Some are wild, some are tame ; the Lord makes them ;—  
Part of their produce becomes clothing ;  
For food and beverage till doom they will continue.'

Taoism, on the contrary, proclaims the kinship between man and Nature in all her aspects, the beauty of flower, the grandeur of water-fall, the indomitable spirit of the pine ; while Buddhism goes even beyond, linking up man with the animal world. Tu Fu, as I have pointed out in a previous book, is pre-eminently a singer of the past.

‘ In most of his work there is an underlying sadness which appears continually, sometimes in the vein that runs through the poem, sometimes at the conclusion, and often in the summing up of all things. . . . The reason is that the Chinese poet is haunted by the vast shadow of a past without historians which yields Golcondas and golden lands innumerable to its adventurers. He is haunted from the crumbling palaces of vanished Kings where “ in the form of blue flames one sees spirits moving through each dark recess.” He is haunted by the traditional voices of the old masters, and lastly, by the dead women and men of his race, the ancestors who have their silent say in every action, thought, and impulse of his life.’ <sup>1</sup>

His verse, revealing as it does a strange and lovely world, stirs and stimulates the creative impulse. The rest is with ourselves. For we, the watchers of an old drama, whose rapture and pain, colour and tumult have sunk to the dimness and stillness of a shadow-show, are also the singers of the past, neither copyists nor imitators, but transmuting into music of our own these intimations of immortality from an alien race and clime. Alien yet kindred, since Tu Fu and his friends are none other than ourselves. Ours are these ‘ horizontal flutes ’ and

<sup>1</sup> *A Lute of Jade*, pp. 51-52.



'short flageolets' played on the waters of Ch'ang An a thousand years ago. And as we handle the harpsicord of Tu Fu the thrill passes through us and is communicated to all the twelve strings. At first, to the ear untuned to older melodies, the chords will sound strange, elusive, fantastic as of a child thrumming its way through the twilight. But when the prelude ceases we are back in the auditorium watching the curtain rise, and a stir of recognition rustles through the silence. For who are these figures before us in silvered outline but ourselves?—our older, younger selves. We do but wake—

'We wake after drinking wine : a light breeze blows through  
the room,  
And we listen to poems in the silver moonlight.  
Shadows of wistaria tendrils hang on our grass-cloth robes  
And the chilly moonlight is a confused mass of white !'

Lafcadio Hearn, in a memorable passage, has adjusted us back to the immortal Gods and the past that is both human and immortal :

'Somewhere it is said that human life is the music of the Gods, that its sobs and laughter, its songs and shrieks and orisons, its outcries of delight and despair, rise never to the hearing of the Immortals but as a perfect harmony. . . . And in one way we ourselves are as Gods, since it is only the sum of the pains and the joys of past lives innumerable that makes for us, through memory organic, the ecstasy of music. All the gladness and the grief of dead generations come back to haunt us in countless forms of harmony and of melody. Even so—a million years after we shall have ceased

to view the sun—will the gladness and the grief of our lives pass with richer music into other hearts—there to bestir for one mysterious moment, some deep and exquisite thrilling of voluptuous pain ! ’

Mrs Underwood tells us that ‘ Tu Fu does not try to teach anything. He does not argue. He simply *is*. ’ This is undoubtedly true, but the same may be said of any of his contemporaries of the Chinese Golden Age. Even Ssu K’ung Tu, perhaps the most philosophic of them all, does not try to teach philosophy. ‘ The poet becomes what he sings, ’ and Ssu K’ung Tu has changed into the phoenix soaring across the Empyrean. As we follow his flight some radiant feather comes floating down to fall on earth. It is ours to possess or leave at will. Does the phoenix collect disciples and found a school for young aviators in the Cosmos ? Open Mrs Underwood’s translations from Tu Fu at random and take the first poem. It is called ‘ Fishing. ’

‘ Fishermen of the Tzan River gather at dawn.

They hold ropes. They throw nets. They frighten the fish.

The brave steer boats with the speed of the wind.

They stand on the waves. They thrust poles. They pull out.

Tiny fish slip away through the numberless holes.

Though half dead, still they struggle, open, then shut their mouths.

Some few stand erect on their tails sometimes.

Then they gasp—they die—besmeared with mud ! ’

It is a vivid picture of fishing, but the fish are not ours to eat. They are being netted, they are struggling and gasping, and dying for ever. The

poet through his absorbing vitality has stayed a moment of time and converted the changing vision into the changeless being of his verse. And what he gives us is not fish to eat but a vital inspiration that quickens us to create for ourselves. Tu Fu was a painter as well as a poet, and it is the painter's feeling for form and proportion that makes him the most impeccable artist of his age.

Li Po differs from his friend in many respects. A characteristic story is told of him how once, in the zenith of his fame, a young, obscure poet approached him with the request—'Master ! tell me how I may become a great poet.' And Li Po answered him, 'First learn the rules of poetry, then break away from them at will.' But the power of breaking away from rules or rising above them and becoming a law unto oneself is a directing power and not an aimless volition. Li Po himself broke the rules of prosody at will, not because his growing powers of expression enabled him to widen and expand the rigid rules of seven-word lines and three-word lines, but because he was too impetuous and temperamental to keep to the narrow path. Critics have noted, and not without justice, that his flights of inspiration though rapid are also brief. The tendency towards formalism and convention has always been a very present peril in Chinese art. It is a Confucian trait, and Li Po was certainly no Confucian. Mr Obata, in his valuable and sympathetic biography, claims him as a Taoist :

'Taoism with its early doctrine of inaction and with its fanciful superstitions of celestial realms and supernatural beings, and of death-conquering herbs and pellets, fascinated the poet. . . . The first

thing he did after his dismissal from the Court was to go to Chi-nan-fu and receive the diploma from the high priest of the sect, "wishing only to return east to P'êng-lai and with the winged men ride to the Scarlet Hill of Immortality."'

From this we may conclude that the philosophy of Lao Tzŭ meant little to him, but the romance of literary Taoism, with its devious and coloured paths haunted by great emperors and poets, a great deal.

'The sea-farers tell of the Eastern Isle of Bliss.  
It is lost in a wilderness of misty sea waves.  
But the sky-land of the south, the Yuch-landers say,  
May be seen through cracks of the glimmering cloud.'

One night, under the moon, he flies across the Mirror Lake to the town of Yen-chi, asleep under the shadow of Mount Tien-mu. Skyward he climbs 'on a ladder of clouds' until his path is choked with flowers, and leaning against a rock he falls into a dream. He hears—

'A peal of blasting thunder !  
The mountains crumbled.  
The stone gate of the hollow heaven  
Opened wide, revealing  
A vasty realm of azure without bottom,  
Sun and moon shining together on silver and gold palaces.  
Clad in rainbow and riding on the wind,  
The ladies of the air descended like flower-flakes ;  
The faëry lords trooping in, they were thick as hemp-stalks  
in the fields.'

Li Po has been called a pessimist, but it would be fairer to call him a child of Nature and subject, like

her, to infinite moods. He loved the solitudes of sky and earth, but to be face to face with Nature meant watching change and decay, and so he welcomed the distraction of human affairs as one would welcome an opiate for the relief of constant pain. He reveals himself best in the last of the 'Spring Rhapsodies' called Sorrow :

' Dawn reddens in the wake of night ; but the days of our life return not.

Sweet-scented orchids blot out the path ; but they die in the drift of waters, and their flowers are blotted out.

The Yang-tse-kiang splashes through shelving maple-woods ;

The eye contains a far horizon, but the wound of Spring lies deep in the heart.

O Poet ! turn thee to the Capital—to the men who shall make thee forget.

Surely, the Earth-sorrow for the passing of Spring from her quiet places is overwhelming.'

This is not wholly pessimism, but a blending of joy and sorrow, though the latter predominates. Because he is a great artist, Li Po senses in all things the joy of creation. But his philosophy of life fails him in the end, so instead of soaring with the phoenix beyond our sight we see him droop and flag towards the fathomless ocean that girdles the Isles of the Blest, away from the vision of God to the earth-bound dreams of man. His weakness lies in his limited horizon ; he never looks beyond a single cycle. With him the spring arrives, summer lengthens into autumn, and autumn falls to winter ; but there, for him, the cycle ends. There is no return to spring.

The Chinese poet was a Master of the Art of Life.

Poetry was the natural outcome of his many-sided experience, of his endlessly trained powers of observation, his release in leisure earned through the long routine of affairs. His art is based upon the philosophy of Tao, from which he extracted three precious things :

*Water*, the symbol of fluidity, change, persistence through adaptation.

*Space*, with its endless power of suggestion, its value in connection with the limited theme.

*Humility* in the presence of that which is greater than man, of the masterpieces which cause him to make a holocaust of his second best and inspire him from the dust to rebuild anew.

His delight in the pleasures of friendship has been noted, and the biographies of famous men abound in allusions to literary coteries and guilds of good-fellowship such as 'The Idlers of the Bamboo Grove,' the oldest literary society in the world, or 'The Nine Old Gentlemen of Hsiang-shan.' But the charm about them all was their impermanence. They were established in no fixed tavern for headquarters, they had no secretary to acquaint them of their monthly meetings, nor treasurer to remind them that their subscriptions were overdue. With 'darkness and day,' as Li Po remembers, they were 'the passing guests of Time.' To-night they meet, to-morrow they are scattered, according to their several vocations, to the four corners of the Chinese world. But they are not to be pitied, since they had the priceless discipline of routine and conduct through human affairs, and in hours of freedom and leisure they were never lonely. For in the presence of Nature they entered into the

wider fraternity of life. When the office is closed Liu Ch'ang of the Sung sets his boat on the lilled pond adrift and listens in to a call that enchants the lingering twilight ; Po Chü-i returns to his forest dreams. These men were the wind harps and the lutes through which the harmonies of all creation stirred :

‘ Hands on the waiting strings fall mute.

Low my heart answers—I am the lute.’

Living in community with life, they saw in death the liberation of the seed, the husk of form unburdened and broken. They make the last vanities of life, the funeral pomp of a Chicago gunman, ridiculous.

When Chuang Tzū was about to die, his disciples expressed a wish to give him a splendid funeral. But Chuang Tzū said : ‘ With Heaven and Earth for my coffin and shell ; with the sun, moon, and stars as my burial regalia ; and with all creation to escort me to the grave—are not my funeral paraphernalia at hand ? ’

Poetry and painting are nearer akin in the Far East than elsewhere. The use of a common brush for both arts has been pointed out in a previous chapter. Thus every poem is painted in ink, and every Chinese ideograph conveys the suggestion of a picture. A poem, according to the ancient sages, says Kuo Hsi, ‘ is a painting without visible shape, and a painting is poetry put into form.’ Kuo-Hsi is here conveying the central idea of Chinese Art, so well interpreted by M. Hovelague, that ‘ spirit is everything ; in all things it is the invisible spirit within them that must be set free and expressed, and not their visible reality.’ But there

is one element that is absent from this meeting of the Arts—the spirit of music.

‘The Chinese,’ says Mr Waley, ‘distinguish two kinds of poetry : (1) verse which is meant to be sung and is associated with a definite tune ; (2) verse which is meant to be recited. In recitation the reader follows his own fancy, aiming only at bringing out the musical quality of the verse.’

Surely the same standard might be applied to all poetry. If a so-called English poem lends itself neither to singing nor recitation, what right has it to the title of poem ? And if this standard is a true one, a great many *vers libres* must disappear as poetry. For music is movement in rhythm, and there is no rhythmical movement in a simple statement of fact :

‘This lady is very beautiful.’

No amount of chopping into single lines of equal or unequal length will change the values. There is, however, a definite case to be stated for those poems which approximate more to painting than to music, and Mrs Ayscough has stated it in her translation of Tao Kai-yu’s commentary on Tu Fu, ‘Tu Fu’s poems are like pictures, like the branches of trees reflected in water—the branches of still trees.’ But the poet blows on the lost flute of Chang-Wu-Chien and the branches bend and sway, the leaves are whirled into the dance. Poetry is the rhythmic dance of words ; words are but symbols of the dancers. And the dance itself is the symbol of ‘the life-movement of the spirit through the rhythm of things.’ There is a rhythm of prose and a rhythm of poetry ; one walks on earth, the other glides



over it. We should not despise the rhythm of walking, for one may walk with balance and with beauty or otherwise. Yet no collection of words, painted or written, can start into movement of its own accord. It is liberated into motion by the voice in song or recitation. Or we may read silently to ourselves and still set free ; for the inner voice will speak or sing to the inner ear, and the lines will pass before us in their ordered sequence.

But what of these apparently motionless images of thought, of poems that 'are like pictures, like the branches of trees reflected in water—the branches of still trees' ? Only this—that the artist has used another instrument. The flute is laid aside, he is painting with his brush. Words melt into each other on the scroll, and a picture lies before us. Word painting ! Still life ! Let us deny it nothing that the artist can give—colour, and line, and space, everything, in fact, but music and movement as we understand it. But there is both music and movement, though we may neither hear nor see it. 'Still life' is a contradiction in terms, since life is never still. Pictorial art continues the rhythm of life in another direction. It sings through sap and sheen, through green blood and red. *It is the undercurrent of life*, while music and the dance float outward where all men may hear and see.

'I put my whole soul into a song which I sang to men, and they laughed at it.

I took my lute, I went, and sat on the top of a mountain, and I sang to the gods the song which men had not understood.

The sun went down ; and the gods danced to the rhythm of my song on the red clouds which floated in the sky.'

Where is the song with the soul of Li Po streaming aloft in spiral gusts of music to the sundown dancing of the gods ?

There is the mountain top crowned by the silhouette of a solitary man, and the red clouds massed above him. No stir, no sound. Moment and movement are held eternally in the colour and outline of an English translation. But the lute of Li Po is muted, and only the picture remains to the world beyond China. Then why call it *vers libres* ? It is a fine piece of word-painting, a landscape without visible form yet visible to the inward eye ; let it stand at that !

Of the Chinese painters the oldest of the great masters to survive is Ku K'ai-chih who flourished in the 4th and 5th centuries A.D.

Chinese critics have held that for depth and spirituality his portraits were remarkable :

‘ And that whereas other artists of his day excelled him in flesh and bone, *i.e.* in anatomical correctness, he surpassed them all in expression. “ And as expression,” says a critic, “ is of an occult nature, beyond anything which can be learnt of all painters, I place Ku first.” ’

This is a difficult saying to understand unless we know what is implied by ‘ the occult nature of expression.’ To begin with, you cannot deal with expression, occult or otherwise, without first considering the idea of perception. The action of perception must precede the reaction of expression. What did Ku K'ai-chih wish to perceive and why did he desire to perceive it ?

The answer to the first part of our question is

that he wished to penetrate into the secret abiding-place of life itself and express the occult or latent forces that control from within, and not the resultant and varying emotions that appear on the surface. To accomplish this, he stressed the environment of his central subject and made it symbolical of his theme. Thus, in painting the portrait of a girl he held it better 'to put the elaboration into the young lady's clothes, and trust to a touch here and a stroke there to bring out her beauty as it really is.' And when he painted the likeness of Hsieh K'un, 'he provided a background of "lofty peaks and deep ravines," thus showing a conception of man's place in Nature, to which there is hardly a parallel in European art.' To bring out beauty or portray character *as it really is* was the object of Ku K'ai-chih. But we are entitled, in fact we are bound, to go beyond this acceptance of what a great artist attempted to do and how he set out to achieve it. We have no right, if we are seekers after truth, to receive as a matter of faith, or as a self-evident fact, this definition of art as an attempt to express things as they really are. For in the why and wherefore lies the whole secret of Chinese art and its profound difference from the art of the West.

The art of China is founded on a philosophy of vitalism, and vitalism implies the two essentials of life—fertility and growth. And growth is the one thing which belongs to us as individuals, in which we may not share. As parents or teachers we watch over and foster all growth—physical, mental and spiritual—providing for others what we cannot assimilate on their behalf. We may stimulate

and train the power of perception both mental and spiritual, but self-expression, through which alone growth is made possible, comes by self alone. As we learn to perceive, so we learn to express ; as we express, so we grow. What follows has been stated by Edmond Holmes in a passage which deserves full recognition from all students of the art of life :

‘ When perception is deeply tinged with emotion, as when one sees what is beautiful, or admires what is noble, the attempt to express it in language, action, or art, seems to be dictated by some inner necessity of one’s nature. The meaning of this is that the perception itself imperatively demands expression in order that, in and through the struggle of the artistic consciousness to do full justice to it, it may gradually realize its hidden potentialities, discover its inner meaning and find its true self. . . .

‘ In the spontaneous attempt to deepen and clarify the perception of beauty by finding suitable expression for it, the cult of beauty becomes a quest and an adventure, and Art—creative art—begins. . . .

‘ If the secret of mental well-being may be set forth in the precept : *Grow and you will know* ; the secret of æsthetic well-being may be set forth in the precept : *Grow and you will see*. . . .

‘ *Grow and you will see (and hear) ; and the more clairvoyant (and clairaudent) you become, the more your vision (and your hearing) grows in clearness and penetrative power, the more urgent will be its demand for expression.*’

Ku K’ai-chih, from the inward urge of self, desires to express what is beautiful or what is noble in the self of others, and in doing so he grows in power of vision. There is, however, nothing of deliberation here ; the desire for growth is sub-

conscious ; the creative art is one of pure adoration and self-surrender.

In the T'ang dynasty (A.D. 618-905) Chinese painting receives a new impetus as the national spirit develops. Buddhist religious art had already begun during the first century to percolate slowly along the Indo-Chinese trade routes. But this other-worldliness of Buddhism, with its saints and haloes, flags and banners, its over-crowded heavens and hells, was alien to the free spirit of China, which found its true expression in space and landscape. Wu Taotzu has always been reckoned by the Chinese as the greatest painter of the race, and next to him Wang Wei. It is difficult, however, for us to form any real estimate of either artist, since so little has survived. One landscape reputed to Wang Wei, representing a waterfall, and two attributed to Wu Taotzu,<sup>1</sup> of vast mountains blotting out the sky, deep gorges with torrents foaming against their rocky barriers, and mists rising along the valley, are all that remain—enough to indicate the astonishing virility of both, but not enough to confirm the judgment of their successors. An earlier Wang Wei, writing some three hundred years before, had already given the outlook of an artist on landscape. This note of exaltation and delight in the pageant of the four seasons and the 'wondrous workmanship of God,' blown in the earlier Liu Sung dynasty, swells with the T'ang and becomes with the Sung a trumpet of challenge and defiance of Chinese spirituality to the gathering powers of darkness across the Mongol steppes :

<sup>1</sup> Of the landscape attributed to both Masters, Mr Binyon says that 'their authenticity is not undisputed, fine as they are ; they are generally thought now to be later.'

‘ To gaze upon the clouds of autumn, a soaring exaltation in the soul ; to feel the spring breeze stirring wild, exultant thoughts ;—what is there in the possession of gold and jewels to compare with delights like these ? And then, to unroll the portfolio and spread the silk, and to transfer to it the glories of flood and fell, the green forest, the blowing winds, the white water of the rushing cascade, as with a turn of the hand a divine influence descends upon the scene. These are the joys of painting.’

Reading this, we become aware of the vast gulf which separates these Chinese artists of the Golden Age from the professionals of the West whose first consideration is their daily bread. The note of Wang Wei is a note of joy in freedom of movement and of choice ; in the masterless soul that responds to no man’s beck and call.

The art of painting matures more slowly than that of literature, and China is no exception to the rule. Poetry under the T’angs led the way, and pictorial art followed in the wake of a wanderer’s lute. The T’ang artists were beginning to find themselves and establish for their calling a dignity and recognition which it had never attained to in the earlier dynasties. Professor Giles tells a significant story in connection with Yen Li-pen, a great official and talented artist of the 7th century A.D. :

‘ One day, when the Emperor was amusing himself in his park, he saw a strange and beautiful bird, and was so much interested that he bade Yen paint a picture of it. Yen was forthwith dubbed “The Painter,” and went home in a rage, and said to his son, “Here am I, a not altogether unsuccessful student of literature, who can only come to the front as a painter, *as if I were a menial*. Take care that you do not give way to a hobby of the kind.” ’

But Yen continued to paint, and by his influence and example secured a recognition for his art at the Court of T'ang which even the years of disruption from 907 to 960 could not destroy until finally, under the Sung Emperor Hui-tsung, an art academy 'with definite studies, exhibitions, and rank for prizes' was established. Later on, Confucian scholars were to pour contempt on this so-called beginning of professionalism, of artists at the beck and call of Emperors. But Hui-tsung was too great an artist to curb, confine or dictate. His object was to encourage and educate, using education in its true sense of 'leading out.' He founded his Imperial Art Institute on his Art Museum, or Senkwa Collection, which was formed of all the great masterpieces brought together from every province in the Empire. It contained more than a hundred pictures of the greatest of all the Sung artists, Li Lung-mien. These were his models and examples of inspiration, held up for the guidance of the rising generation. Had Hui-tsung's museum consisted of these works alone it would have justified its existence. For Li Lung-mien was more than a great painter; he contained within himself a whole epitome of Sung culture. In the middle of the 11th century, in which he flourished, the arts were one, melting into each other and all contained in the single Art of Life. Statesmen, historians, poets, painters, reformers and critics, breaking through the narrow confines of their small exclusive coteries, met on common ground, and every art gained a wider horizon.

Li Lung-mien was himself a Buddhist of the Zen school, which incorporated all that was best in the

native Taoism of Lao Tzū, but his closest friend was Su Tung-p'o, the Confucian poet. His picture 'A Refined Gathering in the West Garden' focuses in a group fifteen contemporaries and the artist himself, the united forces of the Sung spirit. All are in fancy costume, Su Tung-p'o wearing the robes of a Taoist priest, while the artist Mi Fei is depicted in the garb of the T'ang dynasty, not as a painter but as a writer, 'looking upwards and inditing a eulogy of the rocks.' A subtle sense of humour shading into deep symbolical meaning pervades the whole. But the young prince Chao Chi, who in his earlier years sat at the feet of Li Lung-mien, ignored the significance of his call to the throne and remained a painter masquerading in an Emperor's robes. As Hui Tsung, Father of his people, he was Warden of the spirit which he understood and cherished but guarded not at all. So the Warden slept on the Watch Tower while the artist painted and lectured in his Hall of Understanding till the Golden Tartars stormed the frontier cities, and Pien Liang, the capital of the Northern Sung, surrendered after a siege of forty days. Henceforth the national spirit of China was a spirit in exile, crossing the Yang-tse-Kiang with Kao Tsung and rebuilding for itself a temple of halcyon peace by the waters of Hangchow.

For one hundred and fifty years the flower of life, transplanted from its original soil, flourished amid the sheltering hills of a southern province. It was the brief but glorious period of its efflorescence, the most glorious the world has ever seen. And when the soul of the fire-led dynasty flickered low, the torches of the artist-priests of Zen, of Mu Ch'i and his disciples, starred the surrounding heights till one



by one they flared out in the storm and night of Kublai Khan. We may follow the solitary roving light of Ch'ien Hsuan seeking sanctuary from the Mongol flood in Taoist temples among pine-clad hills and inaccessible heights. But the spirit of the Sung has left China for ever, the flower is trampled into a soil that will never yield its like again, and the random seeds are scattered to fall on a kindlier land. Kyoto is rebuilt from the ruins of Hangchow.

## CHAPTER XI

### THE AUTUMN MOON

IN a previous book I have referred to the influence of the moon upon the contemplative and creative spirit of the Far East. The past of China and Japan is a living past : it has not sunk with Babylon nor crumbled with Chaldæa, neither is it embalmed with Egypt in the shadows of her hidden tombs. The artists who wrought in words, on silk or clay, were the children of their age. But they are equally the teachers and inspirers of our own. Their poems are beginning to appeal to us even through the medium of translation, there is no great landscape in their art that does not make room for us, while the influence of the potter's art is acknowledged in a single comprehensive word—China.

That which has lived lives still ; it returns to our call, it grows through progressive revelation. The message of Christ, Buddha or Lao Tzū is interpreted anew, and there is no final criticism to be written on the art of China or Greece. So the living past is a past that reveals a special secret to each succeeding generation, and strikes a corresponding note of harmony with the spirit of the age. It endures as moonlight endures, reflecting on earth the light derived from the sun. And because man is a tidal animal his soul must needs drift with tides drawn by the moon which attracts each particle of earth and sea. But from time immemorial the

Oriental soul has corresponded with the lunar influence more closely than the soul of the West, and the soul of China seems more sensitive to the attraction of the moon than that of India. From the beginnings of Chinese history her astronomers have pondered and speculated in tidal theories and moonlore ; her landscapes and the lovely palaces of Sung artists are flooded with moonlight, while you cannot venture far into the forests, or set sail upon the waterways frequented by Li Po, before the moon will overtake you. And in mythology Chang O, the moon-goddess, is the celestial watcher of human tragedy, and all that she has known of secret things, of passion and pleasure, swift ruin and slow decay, she records in music. Through her great palaces of cold drift the forgotten melodies of unrecorded lives. She is the Goddess alike of sorrow and of love, of Po Chu-i who hears in exile

‘ Only the lurking cuckoo’s blood-stained note,  
The gibbon’s mournful wail,’

and of Chang Jo Hu who rides triumphant on a moonbeam into the darkened chamber of his Lady’s sleep. Her rays are more persistent than water ; you may draw the curtains and think you have shut out all the hosts of heaven, but a tiny crevice will let them in.

Best of all the poets loved her when she lingered above the broken courts and roofless halls of vanished kings. Here Time and Nemesis wrote large, but moonlight brought them a glamour unknown to history, and cast a silver mantle upon their dust. They were what Tu Fu and Meng Hao Yan willed—bright shadows in the rose alleys of romance,

Gods of War, and builders of their dreams in stone. Wang Po, who, like Shelley, died of drowning in his thirtieth year, recalls from the border-line of the *Odes*, written a thousand years B.C., some long-forgotten King of Tang :

‘ There looms a lordly pleasure-tower o’er yon dim shore,  
Raised by some King of Tang,  
Jade pendants at his girdle clashed, and golden bells  
Around his chariot rang.

‘ Strange guests through sounding halls go trailing by,  
Gray mists and mocking winds ;  
And sullen, brooding twilights break in rain on rain  
To lash the ragged blinds.

‘ How many autumn moons have steeped those palace  
walls !  
And paled the shattered beams !  
What is their royal builder now ? A lord of dust ?  
An Emperor of dreams ? ’

To poets and philosophers alike, the moon is the link between the present and the past, binding us in the hours of her silent reign to the men and women who have lived and wrought beneath her spell. Kyuso Muro, the Japanese sage of the 17th century, entertains an autumn moonlight gathering of his disciples. They drink *sake* and recite the Chinese poems of Li Po ‘ until the mountains seemed to fall,’ when the old man quotes from Li Po the following verse :

‘ The men of to-day see not the moon of long ago :  
The moon of to-day shines not upon the men of long ago :  
The men of to-day and the men of long ago  
Are like the flowing water.  
All are alike as they see the moon,  
With verse and wine their one desire is that  
The moon shine long upon the metal cask.’

Then before the party breaks up he takes up the tale and suggests to them his own interpretation of the moon's appeal :

‘ You all unite in praising the moon in verse and song, and my heart is comforted as I see it. . . An emotion that ceases not arises, for the moon is the comfort of old age. . . . What I said of “ the motion that ceases not ” refers to the love of the ancients, the study of their books as we know their hearts and the pain of separation from the world. It is the moon which lights generation after generation and now, too, shines in the sky. So we may call it the Memento of the Generations. As we look upon it and think of the things of old, we seem to see the reflection of the forms and faces of the past. Though the moon says not a word, yet it speaks. If we have forgotten, then it recalls the ages gone by.

‘ This verse of Rihaku (Li Po) is the best of all the poetry about the moon, for it lets the mere appearance go, and unites past and present in one spirit, all “ are like the flowing water.” Yet there is something wanting, for it does not speak of waiting for the coming age, and this is supplied in the ancient writing called *So* :

“ The men who are gone come not to me :  
The men of the future hear me not ; ”

and as I read it my admiration knows no bounds. For this is Kushi's thought <sup>1</sup> : “ No one knows me, none of my own generation ; and the men of the past who were one in heart with me, with whom I would speak, are beyond my reach ; and the men of the coming age who will be of like spirit, hear me

<sup>1</sup> Kushi, author of this couplet, was the Chinese Minister Ch'u Yuan of the 3rd century B.C.

not and know me not." So it is with everyone who has a heart : it is not Kushi only who thus laments. I too see the moon with such a spirit and mourn. The present is the past to the future, and in that age someone like me will grieve as he looks upon the moon.' <sup>1</sup>

Kyuso is a Confucian with Taoist leanings. He pictures himself and his contemporaries as clouds vanishing over the mirror of the moon even as other clouds have vanished before them. His sympathies are with the men who have gone, as the sympathies of the generations to come will be with him. But the men of the future will hear him not and know him not. His is the Way of Confucius and Mencius, of *jen*, 'the feeling in the heart, as the source of all right conduct,' with its 'implication of social good'; and *li*, which is a state of mind 'of equably adjusted harmony and self-restraint.' Kyuso was in many respects the *Chun tzū* or ideal man of Confucius, a term which, as Mrs Grantham says, 'could be rendered by *gentleman* if it did not also mean the courageous citizen who hungers and thirsts for the public good, and the selfless thinker, master of his own spirit, whether sovereign or subject, wealthy or poor, in office or out, because deeply anchored in the cosmic laws of righteousness.'

The more we read the works of the Chinese Master the more we are inclined to suspect that his successors, whether Chinese or Japanese, failed to plumb the depths of his teaching concerning the relation of man to the Cosmic Spirit and his adjustment of himself to a world beyond this world.

<sup>1</sup> Trans. G. W. Knox, in vol. xxx, *Transactions A.S.J.*, pp. 125, 126.

‘The Master said : Would that I could do without speaking. Tzū Kung said : If our Master never spoke, how could we, his disciples, transmit his doctrines ? The Master replied : Does God speak ? The four seasons hold on their course, and all things continue to live and grow. Yet, tell me, does God speak ?’

Because he observed the silence of God, Professor Soothill condemns the teacher of countless generations, ‘because he failed . . . to bring the people into definite spiritual communion with the Righteous Power above, whom he revered and whose call he himself answered.’ By his use of the word *definite* Professor Soothill uncovers the vast gulf that separates the religious idea of the East from the dogmatic theology of the West. For to define is to limit in terms of sense ; it even circumscribes and stunts the spiritual growth of Christianity, which to an increasing number of us is its increasing miracle. And spiritual communion, as every Orientalist knows, is not definite but apprehensive. A man’s religion grows through feeling after God, not by defining Him as we define the tangible and visible. Dr Kenneth Saunders, himself a sincere Christian, sums up the soul of India, which is the very source of Oriental spirituality, as follows :

‘This, then, is India’s most priceless gift to humanity—a belief that the unseen and intangible values are stronger and more real than the things of sense, and to this her philosophy, with its unshaken conviction that there is One behind the many, One alone supremely real, bears witness.’<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> From an article entitled ‘The Heritage of Asia,’ in *Pacific Affairs*, Oct. 1931.

But Reality cannot be defined in terms of the unreal, and that is the profound theosophy of the Upanishads which brings to earth without limiting by definition the concept of Brahm. For

‘The Spirit that wakes in the dreamers, fashioning desire after desire ; this is the shining, this the Eternal, this they have declared as the immortal.

‘In this all the worlds rest, nor does any go beyond it. As one fire, entering the world, becomes one with form after form, so one inner Self of all beings grows one with form after form, and is yet outside them.

‘As one breath, entering the world, becomes one with form after form, so one inner Self of all beings grows one with form after form, and is yet outside them.’

The weakness of Confucianism lies in the fact that the Master accepted God too easily, as one accepts the light of day and goes about one’s daily task but half aware of the sunbeam that filters through the workshop, glorifying work. But here and there, as in the Chung Yung or *Doctrine of the Mean*, the light breaks through with full significance :

‘How abundantly does the divine display the virtues that belong to Him ! We look for Him, but do not see Him ; we listen to Him, but do not hear Him ; yet He enters into all things, and there is nothing without Him. He causes all the people in the world to fast and purify themselves, and array themselves in their richest dresses, in order to attend at their sacrifices. Then, like over-flowing water, He seems to be over the heads and on the right and left of His worshippers.’

It has been left to a Chinese scholar of to-day, Mr C. Y. Hsu, to confute the somewhat shallow



judgment of the Christian missionary on the Master's teaching in respect to God, in the following remarkable passage :

‘ When Confucius said, “ We look for Him, but do not see Him,” he really meant that God is transcendent. But when he said, “ He enters into all things, and there is nothing without Him,” he also meant that God is immanent. The immanent God, as it seems to Confucius, is always the infinitely transcendent.’

And all that has been said by Mr Hsu of the Confucian outlook on the attributes of God applies equally to the outlook of Lao Tzū and his school of thought.

The Rev. Evan Morgan has summed up this aspect of Taoism in a paper, read before the China Society, on Huai-Nan Tzū, the ancient Taoist philosopher of the 2nd century B.C. :

‘ Thinkers looked round the Universe and saw the evidences of life everywhere—life informed by a spirit that was all-pervading and all-sustaining. In great diversity they felt the unity, so there was no break into separate parts. Yet it was not a purely pantheistic view of creation, *since in their view the Tao maintained a supremacy and an independence which did not belong to phenomena or their activities.*’

Confucianism failed ultimately, not because Confucius ignored God, but because, having looked into the secret world of fire that underlies all forms and manifestations of life, he became afraid. He saw only too clearly the dangers and perils of the popular Chinese system of animism, with its crowded

universe of *Shen* and *Kwei*, of good and evil spirits, the latter of whom he himself divided into three classes—those who live in woods and mountains, in water, and underground. And in his desire to escape from elementals he shut down upon the elemental fire that burns in every form of creation and looked outward into a strictly human world of reason and order and the adjustment of man to man. But a purely ethical system is like flesh and bones without the blood that is as necessary to the body politic as it is to the human body. Without it the system is as rigid as a lifeless corpse. And the blood of politics is in the ebb and flow, in the action and reaction of forces contending within the stream of social life, the endless renewal and recharge from the heart of man, in the interchange between the continuous flow of ideas and the tissue cells of human institutions.

There is no fluidity in Confucianism, no call to adventure and experiment such as stirs the blood of youth. Everything is adjusted and for ever. Your very behaviour is prescribed for you by ceremonial. It is the system of an old nation whose artery tubes are no longer elastic, whose blood runs slow, whose pulse beats faint. Confucius pays lip service to 'the joy of wisdom,' but there is little joy in the whole collection of Confucian writings, no gospel nor comfort to be derived from his unemotional catalogue of the five moral virtues, 'self-respect, magnanimity, sincerity, earnestness, and benevolence.' At least on the surface, his philosophy of life appears to have been one of endless striving to set things right by reason and a stoic resignation to the Will of Heaven which adjusts all things to the

levelling equality of Death. Yet though his vision may not be denied, what is called into question is his testimony of things seen. Kyuso Muro, in a curious chapter entitled 'Dark is the Foot of the Candlestick,' says that 'in China and Japan men of great and clear wisdom have been modest and unwilling to use their gifts. So Lao Tzŭ has said : "The wise merchant keeps his treasure out of sight, and the wisdom of the wise seems folly."' This sentence occurs in his reputed conversation with Confucius, and perhaps it may help to explain, more than all the commentaries of the scholars, why one whose wisdom and modesty were clear should be unwilling to reveal his deeper self. And so we may retrace the outline of a dim and ancient Way half obliterated by the feet of Chinese formalists and the trappings of Western prejudice. For with all China to choose from and the deliberate judgments of profound sinologues like Herbert and Lionel Giles, Chavannes and many others, we may haply find ourselves nearer to the reticent spirit of China's greatest sage in the beautiful and poignant closing of Kyuso's diary :

'Swiftly the days and months pass by. Day by day increases disease and age, and labour is of no avail. It is the seventy-fifth year, and not so long had the Old Man hoped to live with the billows of age rolling on. He was paralysed too, so that hand and foot were not easily moved, and only with difficulty could he get up and down. For three years the spring beauty of the garden had not been seen, but the voice of the mango-bird from the tree-top came to his bed, awakening him from his lingering dreams. Patiently did he remember the past as the perfume of the plum blossom visited his pillow. How

blessed was he then, that from his youth he had seen through the windows of philosophy the value of the passing years . . . and had learned haltingly to walk the Way ! What consolation was this for his aged wakefulness ! Through so many months and years, well had he considered the passing, changing world, with its alternating adversity and prosperity, its bloom and decay. Are they all dreams and visions, " the clouds that float above the earth " ? Fortune and misfortune are twisted together like the strands of a rope. . . .

Let customs change ! I alone will follow the Way of benevolence and righteousness nor lose the pattern I have learned ! This is the sign of the Scholar who honours the Way. In the New Year, when men bless themselves with good wishes for a thousand worlds, I will set my heart on the Path of the five virtues only and will change not . . . So I write :

‘ This spring too I go unchanged,  
Five times more than seventy seeking the Way.

‘ This year I have been busy, from spring to autumn, collecting and writing my various talks with my disciples. I finished it in the autumn, and though it is as worthless as the refuse gathered by fishermen, yet if transmitted to our company it may be one-ten-thousandth help to those who study themselves. So at the end I wrote my New Year’s verse, ending yet beginning, and thus reveal an endless heart.’

This is not winter but autumn. For so long as the spirit of man bears fruit and the harvest-moon shines on his ripening wisdom and fulfilment, it is autumn. And winter for this old student of Confucius and the latter’s great disciple Chu Hsi is the recession of life, which is cosmic within its changing

form. Flower and fruit have fallen, the leaves of personality have withered and whirled into the common drift, but through his works and deeds man survives in the buds that are forming for the cyclic renovation of another spring.

Confucianism in Kyuso Muro comes very near to Taoism. One feels almost that the difference is one of intensity and conviction from within. The light that shone before men is stronger and more far-reaching in the Taoist than in the Confucian. There is a note of weariness and uncertainty, a flickering of the flame in those who follow the Master into the outward world of human conduct. Age comes, and with it a flagging of energy and a sense of disappointment, 'Men are in darkness as to righteousness, though wise in gain and lust. The Way is forsaken and customs deteriorate.' Chuang Tzŭ, in the famous interview between the two philosophers, puts the whole case for the subconscious as against the conscious, for the natural urge as against the deliberate motive. Confucius is cumbered with much serving of humanity :

“Tell me,” said Lao Tzŭ, “in what consist charity and duty to one’s neighbour?”

“They consist,” answered Confucius, “in a capacity for rejoicing in all things ; in universal love, without the element of self. These are the characteristics of charity and duty to one’s neighbour.”

“What stuff!” cried Lao Tzŭ. “Does not universal love contradict itself? Is not your elimination of self a positive manifestation of self? Sir, if you would cause the empire not to lose its source of nourishment,—there is the universe, its regularity is unceasing ; there are the stars, their

groupings never change ; there are birds and beasts, they flock together without varying ; there are trees and shrubs, they grow upwards without exception. Be like these ; follow Tao ; and you will be perfect. Why, then, these vain struggles after charity and duty to one's neighbour, as though beating a drum in search of a fugitive? Alas ! sir, you have brought much confusion into the mind of man." "

You cannot graft the cosmic on to the individual, as one would graft a rose on to a briar. The *Rosa Mundi* of universal love is latent in the heart of every man. Only when it is perceived from within will it be allowed to grow and develop of its own accord, and the weeds of self will perish in its shade. Here Christianity and Taoism are at one in the hardest and most difficult paradox of all—that finding is losing, and losing finding. Yet the very word *lose* is implicit of forgetfulness, of unconscious shedding, not of deliberate cutting off. We do not and cannot lose in order that we may find. This is attempting the impossible. Loss of self comes through responding to the creative urge and not through any other means ; when work is done, not for fame, or money, or to help others, but simply because we cannot help ourselves. That is why a poet of all men is nearer to the heart of Tao, because, like the bird, he is winged for freedom and throated for song, and song itself—free, careless, rapturous and unpremeditated—is the symbol of his escape from cage and clod into the universal.

The Taoist lived and relinquished life in harmony with the four seasons. Outwardly he would comply with all the limitations of youth, manhood, and age, never appearing to ape the manners of a

different generation. But in spirit he remained eternally young. Mr Binyon points out that while the Greeks of the classic age discovered the romance of the body, Chinese art depicts the romance of old age. He refers to the extreme Chinese sentiment of reverence for years and compares it with the extravagance of romantic love which inspired the West.

‘ But while with the Confucians this devotion becomes at times a caricature of itself, Lao Tzŭ, or the imaginative tendency which he represents, gave this profoundly national sentiment a new turn, and the Taoist genius embodied its ideal in the wild Rishi, the Mountain-dwellers

“ Who on honey-dew have fed,  
And drunk the milk of Paradise.”

‘ The world has not scarred these or embittered them, for they have passed the world by ; theirs is not the grand endurance or defiance of spirits disillusioned, who still pathetically preserve the will to conquer, even when life no longer presents them with anything worth winning ; but in their high mountain haunts their spirits have been withdrawn into the mysterious recesses of Nature, and, bathing in those life-giving springs, have found the secret of the immortals.

‘ These conceptions are concentrated and summed up in the marvellous picture of Jurojin by Sesshu. It is the image of man grown old, immeasurably old, and wise with a wizard’s wisdom ; but his spirit is young, as the frail blossoms which cluster about his head and among which he peeps out with his inscrutable smile while the wild fawn rubs against his knee.’

Yet we must be careful to define what we mean by the 'romance of the body' and 'the romance of old age.' For the Greeks the romance of the body was essentially the romance of youth, the youth of the body. From the time of Homer to the golden age of Athens under Pericles, fullness of years was not a matter for reverence but reproach. The old man is thrust aside by impetuous youth. Laertes, the father of Ulysses, spends his declining days in obscurity and neglect. The worship of physical strength, glowing health and bodily perfection, brings with it a contempt for physical weakness and the decline of self-assertive manhood. Here and there lip-service is paid by youth to age, but when the crisis arrives and the outward honour and respect are put to the test, the weak and the old go to the wall. Only in Sparta did age receive its due, and we may recall the significant story of the old man in a crowded Athenian theatre for whom no one would deign to find a seat. Finally he came to the place allotted to the Spartan embassy, where all stood up and made room for him. Among the lyric fragments occur the lines of Mimnermus bidding us enjoy the delights of love :

'But when old age with its pains comes upon us, which mars alike even the fair, ever do wretched cares besiege his mind, nor does he delight in beholding the rays of the sun, but is hateful to boys and despised among women, so sore a burden has God made old age.'

The legend of Tithonus for whom Eos, Goddess of the Dawn, had obtained the gift of immortality without the dower of perpetual youth, is symbolical



of the Greek outlook on the pains and penalties that accrue when 'this burdensome and hideous old age looms over us, hateful and dishonoured; which changes the fashion of a man's countenance, marring his sight and his mind with its mist.' In the theory of the Greek law children were bound to support their aged parents, but in practice it was far otherwise. Aristophanes, both in the *Parabasis* of the *Acharnians* and in the *Wasps*, voices 'the hard, ungrateful usage' of elders by the State and their treatment by the younger generation. Euripides ridicules the weakness and foibles of old men and makes them the butt of his tragedies and their comic relief. And in the *Hercules Furens* all the fear and loathing of a people to whom physical beauty and vigour meant life, and age with its attendant miseries a lingering death, rises and swells into the chorus:

'If the high Gods would give me a guerdon,  
Be it youth ere its forces are fled;  
For age is a wearisome burden,  
An Aetna that lies on the head,  
A robe of the blackness of darkness, that over the eyelids  
is spread.

Tell me not of the Asian Tyrant,  
Or of palaces plenished with gold;  
For such bliss I am not an aspirant,  
If youth I might only behold,  
For in weal 'tis a halo of glory, and in woe it is riches untold.

But sombre and stained as with slaughters  
Old age is a thing I abhor;  
Oh! would it were swept o'er the waters  
To plague home and city no more:  
Oh! would it were swept through the Ether,  
And cast on some nameless shore.'

But when Mr Binyon tells us that in the main stream of Chinese art it is 'the romance of old age' that finds expression, we would beg leave to differ somewhat and for 'old age' substitute 'spirit.' For Chinese art, influenced by Taoism and Zen Buddhism, expresses above all the romance of the spirit. Age is, indeed, essential, since no spiritual adventure can be undertaken without due preparation. Youth will be served, and the appeal to youth comes primarily through the emotions. That is why Confucius made of music the basis of education, and Plato founded education on art whose function was 'to lead forth the feelings on the road to good, just as far as progress depends upon feeling.' Creative adventure comes before spiritual adventure since it is the Creator's Way of leading us to Himself. We begin with labour and the exercise of limbs for use ; we pass through the routine of discipline, of lessons learnt and rules memorized, and enter the vocational machine to emerge into the freedom of creative activity, and find ourselves in the joy of self-expression. From Labour to Leisure we proceed, but the end is Rest. And the meaning and finality of Rest, so reverently apprehended throughout the East, is only beginning to make itself felt amid the clash of theological controversies and party slogans. It is the Peace of God which contains, as the greater will always contain the lesser, the Peace of Man we all so ardently desire. It is the stillness of the Soul that confronts us, if we would only read our Bible with understanding, in the arresting command, which comes to every man direct, bidding us stand still and consider the wondrous works of God.

Throughout the T'ang and Sung dynasties wandering poets, driven by the urge of the Beyond to far horizons, have paused and stood still to consider His works :

' I entered through the convent gate :  
The abbot bade me welcome there,  
And in the court of silent dreams  
I lost the thread of worldly care.

' That holy man and I were one,  
Beyond the bounds that words can trace :  
The very flowers were still as we.  
I heard the lark that hung in space,  
And Truth Eternal flashed on me.'

Chinese poetry abounds in lines of suggestive stillness, when the mind through silent contemplation is held in Unity. But, like moods, which they infinitely transcend, these states of Samadhi, of Being on a higher plane, do not last. They are brief anticipations and visions seen in the lightning's flash of what lies beyond this transitory and ephemeral pageant of the four seasons of man's youth, manhood, maturity, and decay. Without laying down any hard-and-fast rule, we may say that in the view of Chinese philosophy it was natural for youth to be influenced by the physical, manhood by the mental, and age by the spiritual. And beyond life's natural span are 'the lingering dreams' of Kyuso Muro which hover above the empty fields when the wain has departed with the last sheaves of a long harvesting. Chuang Tzŭ said : 'Tao gives me this toil in manhood, this repose in old age, this rest in death.' And Po Chu-i, taking this sentence as his theme, has sum-

marized in a song the faith of a Chinese *Chun tzü* and his fellows ' tuning their spirit to the changes of the seasons and at a glance surveying the Universe ' :

' Swiftly and soon the golden sun goes down,  
The blue sky wells afar into the night.  
Tao is the changeful world's environment ;  
Happy are they that in its laws delight.

' Tao gives me toil, youth's passion to achieve,  
And leisure in life's autumn and decay.  
I follow Tao—the seasons are my friends ;  
Opposing it, misfortunes come my way.

' Within my heart no sorrows can abide ;  
I feel the great World-Spirit through me thrill,  
And as a cloud I drift before the wind,  
Or with the random swallow take my will.

' As underneath the mulberry tree I dream,  
The water-clock drips on, and dawn appears :  
A new day shines on wrinkles and white hair,  
The symbols of the fullness of my years.

' If I depart, I cast no look behind :  
Still wed to life, I still am free from care.  
Since life and death in cycles come and go,  
Of little moment are the days to spare.

' Thus, strong in faith, I wait, and long to be  
One with the pulsings of Eternity.'

Nowhere is the case for the romance of the Spirit put more clearly. Po Chu-i feels his oneness with Life, the interpenetration of flame with flame kindled from the secret source of all vitality. He is one with the material and one with the essence, with the cloud that drifts before the wind and the

life of the random swallow. Wrinkles and white hair are the symbols of the fullness of years spent in alternation of toil and leisure, public affairs and creative activity.

The spirit of Po Chu-i floated on the waters of Hangchow long before another poet, Su Tung-p'o, rebuilt the ruined causeways and the Sung had crossed the Yan-tse-kiang to the last capital and centre of China's golden age. Better than any memorial to his name is the great embankment on the Western Lake known to this day as 'Po's Embankment.' At the age of seventy 'a slave to office yet,' he feels the burden of responsibility and the desire for a life of contemplation ; even the joy of creative work is denied him. Yet he is neither vexed nor miserable, since he is able to pass naturally from a state of joy which implies activity of movement to a state of bliss which is only achieved in stillness, when the desires of the body importune no more, when the crown of ambition has withered, and the bird in the heart has flown. He is *Sunyasi*, an Indian word for one who lingers on the border between two worlds, anticipating the Nirvana of the Buddhist, which 'since life and death in cycles come and go,' is yet a far-off dream of immeasurable happiness, in the unity of the created with the Creator.

'The springs of laughter flow not from his heart,  
Where bide the dust and glamour of old days,  
Who walks alone in contemplation's ways ?  
'Tis he, the happy man, who dwells apart.'

He is one with Plato's ideal philosopher whose goal at the end of a life lived to the full 'is always a life

of inactivity, of indrawn stillness, of solitude and aloofness, in which, the world forgetting, by the world forgot, he finds his heaven in lonely contemplation of the Good. That, and that alone, is really life.' To this end, Lao Tzŭ in his old age set out from the State of Chou and with his face to the West vanished beyond the frontier. Yet, after all, why should you and I, citizens of a world in which speed and outward activity are our masters and social intercourse the *summum bonum* of our leisure, give up the strenuous pursuit of things and people one day before we must? Professor E. J. Urwick has furnished the answer in a passage from his masterly reinterpretation of Plato's *Republic* :

'It is because, otherwise, you die while you are yet living : because human faculty and human power of doing and enjoying wax and wane, grow and then decay, give good life but end in death ; and, if we would have life and have it more abundantly, we must root it in some different faculty and power. The superhuman faculty of *knowing*, and the power of *being* which it brings with it, are limitless and endless, for they are related to the infinite and eternal ; find them, cultivate them, anchor yourself to their strength alone, and decay and death can have no more meaning for you.'

And in another passage, which for practical sanity combined with depth of insight cannot be bettered, he sums up the case for the co-operation between two worlds, the old of thought in stillness and intuition, and the new of action and adventure among phenomena, as follows :

'In the long journey of life we do not at first either see or care about the ultimate goal. We

travel all the better for our short-ranged vision ; the goals of the middle distances are on the right road, and they are tremendously real—until we have passed them. But in the later stages of the journey we do not move at all unless the ultimate goal is seen and known for what it is ; no loiterer or dreamer will ever see it ; only those who have travelled well and arduously. And then they will move faster and more actively than before, though we who are behind them will perhaps not know that they are moving at all.'

This is a hard saying for Western minds, for we have already spoken of stillness and listened to the voice speaking to Job, 'Be still.' Yet when we have relinquished the seals of office and left the service of man at the call of One whose service is perfect freedom, we may find in that which our limited intelligence has mistaken for stillness a freedom of movement unattainable by those who bear the burdens of mortality. To cease from wandering, to surrender the last things cherished by age—power and wisdom, the golden treasury of remembrance, and honour among men—and before we set out upon the adventure of death to sense the tide that will bear us away, this is the stillness of Indian *Sunyasi*, Muhammedan *Sufi*, and Chinese Sage. Jalalu 'D-Din Rumi, greatest of the Persian mystics, has expressed this thought,—

' At morning-tide a moon appeared in the sky,  
And descended from the sky and gazed on me.  
Like a falcon which snatches a bird at the time of hunting,  
That moon snatched me up and coursed over the sky.  
When I looked at myself, I saw myself no more,  
Because in that moon my body became by grace even as soul.  
When I travelled in soul, I saw naught save the moon.

Till the secret of the Eternal Theophany was revealed.  
The nine spheres of heaven were all merged in that moon,  
The vessel of my being was completely hidden in the sea.  
The sea broke into waves, and again Wisdom rose  
And cast abroad a voice, so it happened and thus it befell.  
Foamed the sea, and at every foam-fleck  
Something took figure and something was bodied forth.  
Every foam-fleck of body, which received a sign from that  
    sea,  
Melted straightway and turned to spirit in this Ocean.'



## CHAPTER XII

### A VISION OF COSMOPOLIS

IN this green and pleasant land of England, the highways are growing dusty from the feet of those who pass to and fro, proclaiming their intention not to 'cease from mental strife' until they have built Jerusalem. Always, to me, the profound and pathetic delusion of the social reformer lies in his intense egoism and conviction that he and his friends alone have all the plans and all the building-material in their hands. And Jerusalem, which for Blake is a vision of the City of God on earth, must cover all the sites of the present haphazard cities and habitations of men. To England her frontage on the tidal waters of the Thames bringing dreams of Drake and Raleigh and all adventurers that ever sailed into sunrise or sunset, linking the past with the future, and the far dominions with the Motherland. Her Abbeys, Minsters and Cathedrals, her Tudor and Jacobean manors of warm red brick and the last light of day glinting on leaded panes; Chaucer's haunted Pilgrim's Way, Shakespere's Forest of Arden, Sidney's Arcadia, Milton's L'Allegro of Merrie England, the native hedgerow, that green rampart of little farms in fairyland, and lastly the Houses of Parliament, symbols in stone of the growth of constitutional law and order from mediæval times, influencing the minds of her legislators through the rhythmic sequence of events,

looking down on the unbroken flow of her broadening river of democratic thought—this, to me, is England's corner in some future Cosmopolis.

There is no need to labour the overwhelming necessity for the building of a world-city at a time when the aggressive nationalism of country after country is finding itself defenceless against the inexorable tide of economic law. Society as at present constituted in the shelter of the State is still acquisitive, and the duty of the State is to preserve the gains of its citizens and to obtain new and exclusive markets for their surplus goods. Even Socialism, the great opponent of nationalism, since it aims at bringing all peoples under one common economic system and into one class, is not consistent. Its preoccupation for the moment is with what is known as 'The Standard of Life.' But when we come to analyse what is meant by 'the Standard of Life' we find that it all resolves itself into the acquisition of more material comfort through higher and higher wages, regardless of the capacity of either State or industry to pay them. Truly a certain lip-service is paid to education by its exponents, but few of them have ever paused to consider what education means and the derivation of the word. To them education in some future world of Socialism would not be founded on the *leading out* of latent individual capacities but rather the *putting in* of certain theories on life, government, subordination and propaganda. History would be taught with a bias that would leave the writers of Victorian text-books breathless. Science would be dragged down from its summits, bidden to cease from its selfless quest for Truth and apply

itself to the utilitarian purposes of a mechanical view of life.

This is, indeed, putting the cart before the horse, since every great man of science from Bacon onwards has told us that 'science aims primarily at understanding' and that its practical application to the problems of life comes afterwards. Julian Huxley gives us the two-fold reason for his devotion to science :

'This has been largely because I am so made that I want to know about things ; I cannot help valuing knowledge for its own sake, or finding interest and excitement in the pursuit of new knowledge. But I would not continue to devote my energies to science if I did not believe that science was also useful, and, indeed, absolutely indispensable to human progress. It is the only means by which man can go on increasing his power over Nature and over the destinies of his race. On the other hand, without being an adherent of any sect, orthodox or unorthodox, I have always been deeply interested in religion, and believe that religious feeling is one of the most powerful and important of human attributes.'

Huxley's attitude in no way differs from that of his contemporaries for whom the quest of Truth comes first and is hereafter justified by its results. Discovery for the sake of discovery is the primal urge. It is born in the soul of man which aspires, and not in the reason which works out and applies to rational use the incidental results of adventure into the unknown. Something greater than humanism, than the desire to alleviate suffering, to ensure better physical conditions for future

generations impels the scientist on his lonely way. He seeks first the Kingdom of Truth, and all these things which make for the benefit of the human race are added unto him. A purely utilitarian quest for a definite and therefore limited object would destroy the whole spirit of his adventure, which cannot be circumscribed or curtailed by the instructions of a lay bureaucracy.

There is an old Sanscrit proverb, much used by the Theosophists, which says, 'There is no religion higher than Truth.' And in the building of Cosmopolis surely this motto deserves to be engraved above the portals of that central shrine where East and West may meet in common worship. All paths, whether of scientific research or philosophic thought, converge towards a goal which is unattainable to human limitation and through the narrow channels of the senses, for Truth is ever surrendering and ever receding, and new discoveries merely open out new horizons. But the one necessity of life, recognized by Science, philosophy and religion alike, is the necessity to move on. And the question of movement raises the whole question between East and West. We assume that the West is active and the East passive except so far as it responds to and is awakened by the activities of the West. To the average American or European, movement is external and in the direction of scientific control, the harnessing of Nature for the use of man ; progress and civilization follow in its train. His outlook on religion is vaguely static, and, because he is a Westerner, a literal interpretation of an Eastern gospel satisfies him. His idea of Hereafter is also static and con-

sists of immediate transference from this transient life to an eternal state of bliss and reunion with those he has loved 'and lost awhile.' Philosophy is for the eclectic and exclusive few, and, with rare exceptions, the philosophers are engaged in writing for and against one another. Mr Irving Babbitt is perhaps the chief exponent in America of the philosophy of humanism as opposed to the Romantic movement in literature. His influence on contemporary thought is fairly extensive but largely in the direction of destroying false ideals, rather than in the creation of new ones to take their place. For as Mr Fausset, summing up the fatal weaknesses in both, points out :

'The true Romantic perceives an ordering mind, not above but in the flux. For him divinity is immanent and suffers a loss of reality by being abstracted from the actual. And his primary endeavour is not self-expression, in Mr Babbitt's egotistic sense, but self-completion by an act of imagination in which he identifies his mind with the mind of life.'

But the Oriental knows little and probably cares less about the Puritan reactions of Mr Babbitt and his followers. And the gospel of Christ as expounded by the Western missionary has touched him not at all. Neither will the gospel of the new Hedonism, of which Mr Llewelyn Powys is one of the foremost exponents, ever appeal to him.

To the latter's despairing cry, 'Will the tide of the world's purpose never turn towards the grace of life?' the answer comes, 'Return!' Across seven hundred turbulent years of time we may hear

these intimations from a golden age when the tide of the world's purpose turned towards the grace of life—joy in creative activity and the recognition of the divinity within, and happiness which floats on the firmament of life encompassed by that which is beyond attribute or definition,—

‘ I see all gods, O God, within thy body,  
And likewise all the various hosts of beings,  
Brahma the Lord on lotus-throne abiding,  
The sages all, and all the snakes of heaven.’

And the final grace of life is the grace of humility in awe and reverence when the atom within immanence turns outward to recognize transcendence and acknowledge that the Whole is greater than the sum of all its parts :

‘ And all the hosts of siddhas do Thee reverence,  
And wherefore should they not to Thee do reverence,  
Great-souled one, greater than Brahma, first creator ?  
O infinite Lord of gods, the world's home art Thou,  
The imperishable, being, non-being, and *beyond them*.’

China more than India, more than Athens, possessed the grace which comes from joy in creation ; equally with India her Nature poets and philosophers had attained the grace of happiness in communion with life, but the soul of India alone was able to touch her innate humility and transmute it with the grandeur of awe and reverence, making of those brief years of her flowering and fruition a lovely haunting dream. But the East is not likely to listen to the siren voice of the hedonist any more than it will heed the academic prunes and prisms of the humanist. The whole attention of Asia is con-

centrated on the sound of the waves of ' Western Progress ' breaking against the immemorial barriers of national self-sufficiency and spiritual aloofness. Years before Mr Gandhi invaded England with his spinning-wheel, a well-known Indian publicist, writing anonymously in the pages of *The Westminster Review*, voiced the apprehensions and profound alarm of his fellow-countrymen :

' Labour-saving machinery may be said to have benefited humanity by cheapening production, and thus placing within the reach of the poorer classes comforts and decencies of life which they could not command before. To a large section of the Orientals, however, the benefit is of a highly questionable character. In the first place, the cheap machine-made articles of the West have destroyed most of their indigenous manufactures. Thus the profits of such manufactures, instead of remaining in the country and enriching it, now go out of it and swell the drain from the East to the West ; and the great majority of the artisan populations being suddenly thrown upon agriculture for their livelihood, the pressure upon land has increased considerably, to the serious detriment of the agricultural and labouring classes. The Orientals make faint efforts here and there to compete with Europeans ; but, under present conditions, there is hardly any hope that they will be able to do so successfully, except in independent and europeanized Japan. Depressed by the loss of their independence, total or partial, poorer than the poorest nation of the West, and without any scientific or mechanical training in the Western sense, they have to run a race with a people who have had the start of a century, and who are armed with all the advantages of accumulated capital—not a small portion of which is derived from the exploitation of

the East—of long scientific and mechanical training, and of the assurance engendered by conscious strength.'

Our Indian writer quotes Huxley, who would have the men of his time as

'grown men, play the man  
Strong in will  
To strive, to seek, to find and not to yield.'

What, he asks, has this purely Western ideal of the grown man done for the world? Can it be said that the intellectual calibre of a Cuvier or a Darwin is superior to that of an Aristotle or Kapila? And in ethical development where is the grown man we would dare to exalt above Christ or Buddha? Then, because he is a Hindu and just as strong in his national-religious method of approach to reality as Huxley in his Western-scientific method of progress towards a rule of conduct and order through knowledge, he bids us remember the ancient sages who 'counselled retirement from the strife and stress of material progress as far as practicable' in order that we may fight the battle of spiritual progress 'more energetically and efficaciously,' holding with Buddha that

'One may conquer a thousand thousand men in battle,  
But he who conquers himself is the greatest victor.'

To what purpose are the Western nations playing the man; wherefore do they strive, and what do they seek to find? Put yourself in his place when you hear him answer:

'Not the victory which is achieved by love, mercy and self-sacrifice, but the victory the path to



which lies over broken hearts, if not also broken heads, over the misery, starvation and destruction of countless fellow-creatures in all quarters of the globe.'

The author is a Hindu, not an Indian. For 'India' is merely a geographical expression and 'All-India' a political figment used to bind together many peoples in a common opposition to the British Raj. Mr Gandhi is a Hindu of Hindus, and as such will never consent to the equilibrium which alone might justify the term 'United India,' Hindus at one end of the scale, Muhammedans and Minorities at the other. As Mahatma he is out to save the Hindu soul alive, to break with the alien forces of Western materialism completely. But because these forces cannot be combated by texts from the Upanishads and saints living up to their precepts alone, he has invoked the negative power of passive resistance, of refusal to pay taxes, and of economic boycott. And the aim and end of the long-drawn-out struggle between Hindu Congress on the one hand and British Parliament on the other is the withdrawal of a great sub-continent from the comity of nations. But the world needs India, and India on her part needs the world.

And here it is permissible for an Englishman to look back on his own national past and see the emergence of a national spirit through the welding together of apparently irreconcilable forces—Celtic, Anglo-Saxon, and Norman—into one. The lesson of his country's past has taught him to look forward with hope and confidence to the future of a land that will bestow its name on a spirit truly national, to which the peoples and creeds within its borders

will make their own unique contribution. If Hindu culture is to predominate, let it emerge by the slower process of evolution and survival even as the Anglo-Saxon emerged to give common ideals and traditions and a common tongue to the race. At the moment the struggle that is going on over a constitution for India is part and parcel of the greater warfare which is being waged between the forces of national self-sufficiency and isolation by tariff walls and a growing sense of cosmopolis and the interdependence of State and State. India under Gandhi would add yet another barrier, that of spiritual aloofness and exclusion. For the Mahatma is the spokesman of Hindu tradition, of the Brahmin, and the rigid system of caste. And in the Commonwealth of man whose central idea is the individual contribution of each nation and individual to the welfare of all, there can be no room for caste. It will die as feudalism has died in Europe. And only then, when the Brahmin no longer stands between us and the sun of Brahm, shall we begin to understand the true significance of Hinduism, the grandeur of the Upanishads, and the divine vision of God's reality arising in the Bhagavadgita.

This spirituality and this vision have been partly obscured for us by the human swarm and the jungle of the mind through which we have to thread our way, the priests shepherding the ignorant masses, the *bunyas* who live as parasites on their toil, the multiplicity of cults ranging from extreme asceticism to wildest eroticism, the subjection of women to their men, dating from the laws of Manu, chains hallowed by time and tradition. But the soul of India survives not in

the jungle, bazaar, or palace-warren, but in the great open spaces where the creative minds of her poets are free to wander, like Kalidasa's Cloud Messenger, from Vindhya's forest-crests to the snow-peaks of Himalay, and beyond. For theirs is a farther range than that of a cloud drifting to anchor on Mount Kailasa. Rabindranath Tagore and Muhammad Iqbal, Hindu and Muslim, are Indians of the India that is building through them. When Iqbal sings of himself :

‘ I have no need of the ear of to-day,  
I am the voice of the poet of to-morrow,’

and again when he proclaims :

‘ I am of India : Persian is not my native tongue,’

he is creating a poet for a land that lies on the horizon of our dreams where the fire and the rhythmic movement of Persian Sufism and the white light of Hindu Spirituality will complement each other. For it is in Faith

‘ Which kindles in men's hearts a flame of undying song ’

that the India of the future will be established, and not in the craft and schemes of her political parties. And Faith, as the Rishis of the Vedas, and the seers of the Upanishads, and the Prophet of Islam, and the Christ of Galilee, have all realized, needs the nurture of solitude and self-discipline before the hour of revelation dawns.

Those whose pride is in the past achievements of their race, who see in themselves the successors of epic heroes from Ramayana or Mahabharata, and

of Manu the lawgiver, would do well to go to school with their own poets of to-day before attempting to build the world of to-morrow. Not in the Conference Rooms of London or of Delhi alone but above all in the House of Quiet lies the secret of India's future. Harindranath Chattopadhyaya's lovely poem contains the first essentials of a true creative activity :

‘ Each moment when we feel alone  
In this great world of rush and riot  
Is as a jewelled stepping-stone  
Which leads into the House of Quiet.

‘ Within it dwell the ancient seers,  
Beyond unreal griefs and cares,  
Beyond unreal smiles and tears,  
Beyond the need of chant and prayers.’

Art, Politics, and Education, and all things that matter are based upon Religion. And Religion is not routine either of chants and prayers, or observances or obedience to any will but that of God within.

‘ It lies,’ says Okakura, ‘ in that vibration of peace that beats in every heart, that harmony that brings together emperor and peasant ; that sublime intuition of oneness which commands all sympathy, all courtesy, to be its fruits. . . . These things are the secret energy of the thought, the science, the poetry, and the art of Asia. Torn from their tradition, India, made barren of that religious life which is the essence of her nationality, would become a worshipper of the mean, the false and the new. . . .’

The vision of Mother India is not to be found in the rhetorical outbursts of Pandit this or Pandit that, but in these prophetic lines of the greatest of her poets, Rabindranath Tagore :

' I seated her upon a car of triumph and drove her from end to end of the earth.

Conquered hearts bowed down at her feet, and shouts of applause rang in the sky.

Pride shone in her eyes for a moment, then it was dimmed in tears.

" I have no joy in conquest," she cried, the woman in sorrow. I asked her, " Tell me whom do you seek ? " She only said, " I wait for him of the unknown name."

Days pass by and she cries, " When will my beloved come whom I know not, and be known to me for ever ? " '

Yet if her sons will have the patience to read on, they will find that the fulfilment of prophecy is coming for those who are strong to endure and patient in adversity, who ' bear the burden of power ' within themselves :

' For every throb of their pain has pulsed in the secret depth of the night, and every insult has been gathered into thy great silence.

And the morrow is theirs.

O Sun, rise upon the bleeding hearts blossoming in flowers of the morning, and the torchlight revelry of pride shrunken to ashes.'

In his interesting and eloquent book, *Faith and History*, Mr J. S. Hoyland appeals for a wider interpretation of the lessons conveyed by history. History, from his point of view, should be studied as the life-story of humanity, and national history merely as the record of a particular contribution to the welfare of mankind as a whole. The first point of view is also that of Mr H. G. Wells, who has done

more than any living historian to present the life-story of humanity. And I see no reason to doubt that Mr Hoyland's second point on the teaching of national history would have his full approval. For though Mr Wells is first and foremost an internationalist, he could hardly object to the particular contribution to the general welfare. The present writer, working on the same lines as Mr Hoyland, from which he has never deviated since the inception of *The Wisdom of the East* Series many years ago, has endeavoured in these pages to give some idea of the national contribution of China to the world. There he must part company from the author of *Faith and History*, who, following John Hubbard in his *Fate of Empires*, has stressed the purely Confucian element and finds that 'the Chinese contribution towards human progress lies mainly in the sphere of family-loyalty, of self-sacrifice for the sake of posterity.'

But self-sacrifice for posterity is only one aspect of Chinese life. From its patient and incessant warfare for survival against death Western Individualism and Socialism have much to learn from Chinese Racialism which comprehends both. Yet the history of China, more than that of any other nation with the exception of Greece, is inseparably bound up with the history of its art. And 'just as the Chinese family worships the ancestors and adores the child, so Chinese art preserved the old and welcomed the new.' The very spirit of Conservatism which, like Janus, looks backward and forward, is to be found, for the benefit of a future world, not in the political tradition of an English party, but in the brief and brilliant years of China's

efflorescence and fruition. For Conservatism up to the time of the fall of the Sung dynasty was the doctrine of the guarded life. It watched over, fostered and protected all that remained vital of the old, rejected what was redundant or obsolete, and drew from the changing spirit of the times whatever made for renewal into the whole organism of national life. The course of assimilation was gradual, but the digestive process which must precede it can neither be hurried nor unduly retarded. Statesman, philosopher, and artist, all looked to Nature as their guide. Again, using Nature as their exemplar, they sensed the unity of life and their outlook was that of the whole man, and Society never became precious with little galaxies of specialists rotating in mutual admiration, like the literary and artistic coteries of to-day. Yet in their fullness of existence, joy in creation, and stimulus of friendship they were not unmindful of a power beyond, transcending the world of their delight. Awe and reverence are implicit in the masterpieces of Zen art belonging to the later Sung. And the hills around Hangchow were consecrated to their shrines of rest and abiding peace where

‘ As the sound of a bell is withdrawn till it fails in the green  
mists of twilight ’

they brought their burdens of the day along the glimmering mountain path, and shedding self as a garment that is laid aside before sleep, entered Samadhi. Chinese anthologies are full of allusions to some

‘ Lonely little convent with its secret haunts of prayer,  
With its shadowed cells for dreaming where eternities abide.’

To assert with some critics that poetry is simply 'a normal muscular relaxation of the soul' is to do less than justice to the Chinese poets. You may say that they drew from Nature's deeps of inspiration, that they regarded the endless resources of Nature as within themselves and never without, that their ideas flowed outward from the single well of inspiration within. But from time to time they felt the need for rest and replenishment, not from the particular but from the universal source of all energy and creative power. And this sense of communion, which in the West chiefly applies to an act of worship in the congregation of believers, and is therefore partial and exclusive, lies at the very core of Chinese religion and at the very base of all Chinese art.

There are two aspects of the spirit of self-sacrifice in the history of Chinese and Japanese ideals. One, as Mr Hubbard points out, is the spirit of self-sacrifice for the race. The other, about which both he and Mr Hoyland, and indeed most Western writers, are silent, is the spirit of devotion to the creative ideal which touches, not the single chain of links rendering the family immortal, but that subtle network of associations and sympathies and contacts with other-life through the medium of a single ganglion from which the nerves of the spirit radiate.

Two stories from Chinese legend will serve to illustrate both. The first is called 'The Casting of the Bell,' retold by Mr E. T. Werner in *Myths and Legends of China*. During the reign of Yung Lo of the Ming dynasty it was decided to transfer the seat of Government from Nanking to Peking, and



the Emperor ordered many great buildings to be erected in the new Capital, among them the inevitable Drum Tower and Bell Tower of a Chinese city, one for lookout purposes and the other for alarm. A mandarin called Kuan Yu had charge of the casting of the bell to be hung from the latter. Twice he failed through a fault in the casting, and Yung Lo ordered him to be beheaded if he failed again. His only daughter, a girl of sixteen, known as the beautiful Ko-ai, found out the cause of her father's distress and went to consult an astrologer. To her horror, she learnt that a perfect casting could never be achieved unless the blood of a maiden were mingled with the molten metal. Ko-ai said nothing to her father, but on the day when the public ceremony of casting the bell was performed she slipped through the crowd and threw herself headlong into the boiling fluid. And 'on uncovering the bell after it had cooled, it was found to be perfect, but not a vestige of Ko-ai was to be seen.' Now Kuan Yu, as head of the family, was the fountain-head of family life. On him depended the unbroken maintenance of the ancestral rites. From this traditional point of view the girl was nothing. She had no place in the immemorial sacrifices to her ancestors, no name to hand down to posterity. Yet her act of self-immolation has enshrined her among the immortals, and her name is handed down with reverence in every Chinese household.

The second story is to be found in Havelock Ellis's *The Dance of Life*, and is derived from one of the ancient Chinese chronicles. It relates the sacrifice of T'ung, the patron god of potters :

It happened that a complicated problem had baffled the potters. T'ung laid down his life to serve them and to achieve the solution of the problem. He plunged into the fire, and the bowl came out perfect. 'The vessel's perfect glaze is the god's fat and blood; the body material is the god's body of flesh; the blue of the decoration with the brilliant lustre of gems is the essence of the god's pure spirit.' 'That story,' says Havelock Ellis, 'embodies the Chinese symbol of the art of living, just as we embody our symbol of that art in the Crucifixion of Jesus. The form is diverse; the essence is the same.'

And as the vitality of T'ung passed into the bowl, which thus became a symbol of selfless devotion and dedication, so the vitality of the Chinese artists and poets flowed into words, into pottery and porcelain, glaze and colour and line until vitality was established for ever in the thing created; and what moves us in the picture of a flower is not fidelity to type or detail so much as the life of the flower itself, not imitated but engendered. Why listen to the babble about modernity from fashionable teachers and preachers of the cult of the modern spirit? For the modern spirit is the inheritor of the old and venerable just as the modern son is the inheritor of the ancestral estate of human complexity, feature, and temperament. Life is in the flow, and if you truly live you must flow with the stream and not attempt to battle against it.

But the spirit of modernity is the Life Spirit pressing on. No breath of ultra-modernism can change the spirit of the waters into something new and strange. Only the landscape, through which

the singing, turbulent, dancing, sunlit or shadowed race passes to the cosmic sea, is new ground. The outlook may be wider, grander or even more desolate than that of a decade ago. But the moving spirit is older than these hills and valleys, these mud banks and monotone of level plains through which it flows. Do not praise the puny spirit of your age, nor offer oblation to some fabled spirit of a golden past. Praise life itself and go with it whithersoever it may take you. You cannot put back these waters, neither can you stay them, but only pass with them. 'In vain,' sings Li Po,

'In vain we cleave the torrent's thread with steel,  
In vain we drink to drown the grief we feel ;  
When man's desire with fate doth war this, this avails alone—  
To hoist the sail and let the gale and the waters bear us on.'

If our ears are open we may hear, above the siren voices of hedonism, and the croaking of the humanistic frog, the clear song of life that the Chinese Masters heard and answered centuries ago. Our conscience, which sets us afloat and bids us carry on, is more, *pace* Mr Babbitt, than 'a sort of expansive instinct for doing good to others.' That is not the first consideration, but merely a result of conduct urged and ordered by conscience. For the true conscience, as Mr Fausset well points out, 'necessitates an identification of the self, with all its faculties brought into deeper accord, with the life that surrounds it.' And when we speak of 'Life' we are liable to represent it in terms of humanity and so become partisans, separating life from life, humanity from the fellowship of all.

Vitalism is greater than Humanism, as the whole

is greater than the part, however important that part may be. The contribution of China to the world lies in the outlook and response of the whole man to the whole of life, in his recognition and acceptance of the Three Necessities—Labour for Maintenance, Leisure for Creation, and Rest for Renewal. The Chinese sense of spirituality cannot be defined by the opposite of any sense, the inaudible, the invisible, the intangible. It is above all a sense of wholeness which cannot be attained except by the whole man. Neither was it developed through life-avoidance and ceaseless contemplation, as in India, but by the slower process through toil and contact and routine, the school of discipline, of rule and order through the widening freedom of creative activity and self-dependence into self-surrender and rebirth. Taoism, through the man of Tao, interprets the saying of Christ in the Fourth Gospel: ‘Verily, verily I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.’

In dealing with the contribution of Japan to the world we are at once involved in difficulty. For if we speak of Japanese art, literature, philosophy, or religion we are at once overwhelmed by the vast shadows from the mainlands of China and India, countries to whom Japan owes all these things. Some years ago the British Museum authorities held an Exhibition of Chinese and Japanese art. A brief note by way of preface to the Japanese paintings tells us that ‘With the introduction of Buddhism and the rapid adoption of Chinese civilization in the sixth and seventh centuries, the arts soon flourished in Japan. Of the painting of

this early period very little survives, but enough to show that while entirely derived in its main features from the Chinese art of the T'ang dynasty, it had before long developed variations of a distinctively Japanese character.'

In one sentence you get the whole of Japanese history, of derivations and variations more or less swiftly developed in accord with national requirements. And if you take away the influence of Chinese ideals on Japanese art, literature and ethics, and that of India on religion, what of permanent value would remain from the past? If we are to answer this question and do justice to the native spirit of Japan we must find meaning in the ancient religious cult of Shinto and trace its development through Bushido into its flowering in the 17th century when grafted with the doctrine of Oyomei (the Japanese name for the Chinese philosopher Wang Yang Ming) by his Samurai disciple Nakae Toju. We should have to follow the old myth-starred way of the Spirits which is the Chinese *Shen Tao*, and watch its slow broadening under feudalism tempered by Zen influence into *Bu-shi-do* or Military-Knight-Way until its final culmination in the teaching of Nakae Toju, which resulted in the awakening of Japan and the spirit embodied in General Nogi bearing her armies to victory in the Russo-Japanese War. To accomplish this would entail the writing of another book, and in these pages it is only possible to give the merest summary of native influences, modified later on by Chinese thought and Indian religion.

Shinto, as Dr Inazo Nitobe says, 'may be summed up as the ensemble of the emotional elements of the

Japanese race.' It begins, like all primitive cults, with a mythology in which gods and super-men or heroes are hardly distinguishable, with Japan as the universe, and gradually clarifies into a system of ancestor-worship in which household gods are included. It has no sacred books and no original mission to make converts, and beyond the bare recognition of immortality through the ancestral Spirits, does not define any future state, whether Paradise or Hell. The Emperor is the personification of the Supreme Ancestor. After the Restoration in 1868 an attempt was made to clarify Shinto still further, and missionaries were then despatched to all quarters of the Empire to expound the three principles of—

Patriotism and reverence for the Spirits.

The rule of Heaven and the way of man.

The rule of the Emperor as *Kami* or Superior One, and obedience to his will.

In accordance with these precepts, Shinto, says Mr Nitobe, 'has the power to give contentment to a good patriot or a faithful subject. It can never satisfy the obstinate questionings of the human soul.' It is in connection with the cult of the Samurai, the Knightly Way of Bushido, that Shinto makes its two fundamental contributions to the evolution of national spirit—love of Country and loyalty to the Ruling House. Other factors taken from foreign sources are then added. From Confucianism Bushido took the noble or higher type of man as its exemplar, and made of him the ideal of 'the perfect knight'; from Zen Buddhism its mental and physical training; and from the philosophy of Oyomei its central teaching of individual responsi-

bility through thought translated into action. But Nakae Toju, the Japanese disciple, went far beyond his Master. He taught

‘that what is right to-day may to-morrow prove wrong, because ryochi, his “conscience,” is more than customary morality, it is creative morality. . . . Nakae would say, “Use your intuition and reason.” This freedom of conscience with him is not extreme individualism, but a freedom to consider the good of the group in the light of his ever-reaching *creative conscience*. This creative conscience is in many respects like the Christian doctrine of a creative Holy Spirit revealing all things. This school of thought, as a world-religion, can make a great contribution to the unification of ideals in the real world of religion toward the Universal Brotherhood of Man.’

Here is the essential point of contact between the Japanese spirit and the progressive spirit of Christianity ‘revealing all things’ in due season. East and West the forces of indiscipline are let loose. Youth, whether in the new-born nationalisms of the East or the new-made democracies of the West, is clamouring to come into its own. Without training, without sense of responsibility, without patience, without vision beyond a vague mirage of national and economic liberty which draws those who follow into the waiting desert, the blind crowd presses on.

In China and India, and until recently in Egypt, the power is not in the hands of those who profess to lead. It lies in the fatal schools and colleges of the East where the strong leaven of Western thought and education divorced from religion is still fer-

menting. It is the chaos of adolescence rather than the slow evolution of order through maturity. In darkened classrooms, from which the clear light of history and the lessons of time are excluded, boys are crying for the moon. And, following the line of least resistance, their teachers have plastered the walls with paper moons and cardboard constitutions. National freedom is not so much an ideal as a necessity, and the world needs a free, self-governing India and China, each capable of making its unique contribution to the building of Cosmopolis and the unity in diversity of the human race.

But that is only possible when, as in Japan, the nation speaks with one voice and not with the clamour of many voices. Rice generals and salt generals, Hindu or Muhammedan irreconcilables, representatives of class or caste domination, are all leaders of disruptive forces, not of healing and making whole. If the house is to be freed from foreign control or international encumbrances it must first be set in order. But order, whether in a family or a nation, can only come about when the members are prepared to recognize one head and one control and adjust themselves in mutual goodwill to one another. And the same applies to the West where the manual worker, with the mentality of his fourteen years of primary education, desires to rule all classes in the interest of one. That is not democracy but a new religion from the underworld, based on the glorification of manual work as against brain work.

In England prominent leaders like Mr Kirkwood have asserted that there is no place in the Labour movement except for the manual worker who is



born within the labouring class. Yet on the heels of the long, straggling procession bearing the red banner with hammer and sickle follows the spirit of the future for which all parties will have to make way. For life was not made for Labour but for Leisure through Labour, and with the multiplication of labour-saving machinery the Leisure State is nearer than we dream of. And in the education of the future a new outlook is already beginning to dawn. Not for maintenance alone will the child be taught to use hand, eye, and brain, but for the sake of work which brings no material reward, which begins in adventure and culminates in the joy of creation for its own sake ; not in the thing created, which is only an incentive to do better, to go beyond, but in the process of creation. And here the artist in life takes over from the politician cumbered with much serving of material ends which are not ends in themselves but means to an end whose goal is spirituality, and the recognition by each of his place in the brotherhood of all, not of common blood but of essential flame, the flame of life that flows into form and matter from its common source.

Once more the Wise Men of the East will set out to follow a star shining over the cradle of a new-born child. And they will bring with them the precious gifts for which the world has waited over-long, from India the vision of Being, the power of knowing that in the midst of change and impermanence we are in Life ; from China the art of living which comprehends all the arts in one ; from Japan the gift of self-control, individual and national, and the awakening of the creative conscience which bids us despise nothing that is old and reject nothing that is

new, but put all things to the test of reason and intuition for ourselves. To educate is not to instil, but to help in setting free. And no text-book of ethics or citizenship, no code of morals gathered from the Bibles and theologies of this period or of that tribe will teach us to realize that freedom for self implies freedom for others, that in the Cosmos where life radiates there is room for all, that the capacity for growth is infinite so long as we dare carry self-creation to the point of self-surrender, losing ourselves in order that we may find our neighbour and all the humbler yet kindred world of life within.

## EPILOGUE

THIS record of adventure between two fellow-travellers, writer and reader, is brought to an end, and the time has come when each goes on a separate way. Once again the writer returns to the dust and conflict of life, since life comes before literature, and to-day there is too much literature and too little life. So the world may well spare another writer, or a thousand, but it cannot afford the withdrawal of a single individual alive and alert to the spirit which is slowly giving birth in so much pain and suffering to a new world. For the issues of chaos or cosmos, national and class discord, or co-operation in harmony between all, depend upon the individual; each one of us must bear his weight of responsibility. But in matters of responsibility freedom is essential; freedom for judgment and far-reaching decisions and choice of ways. And since only in leisure can freedom be attained, it follows that only those who have freed themselves in leisure can help to set others free. Through creative activity we liberate ourselves for awhile from the machinery of maintenance, and whatever horizons we achieve for ourselves we achieve for others. Even the joy that was ours of creating lingers in the work we have laid aside, as the aroma of roses, whose destiny is fulfilled, remains in a bowl of pot-pourri, as a library is a fragrant place to those who, like Master Yuan Mei, know how to use it aright,

' Ten thousand tomes with pendant discs of jade,  
Bowls of old Shang with bronze of Chow displayed !  
And suddenly the small  
Tinkle of girdle gems floats through the hall,  
As though the wind custodian sings,—  
" I guard the fragrance of a thousand Springs.  
Draw near ! draw near !  
Ten thousand yesterdays are gathered here." '

The lessons to be learnt from the artist-philosophers of the T'ang and Sung are mainly lessons in the art of gardening and woodcraft. If you carry away with you in parting some vision of the garden of life that was, and a woodland-shrine hallowed by deity and haunted by silent prayer, you will have glimpsed ' the Ahness of things ' that contains growth and decay, lilt and lament, the joy-in-sorrow of impermanence. But you will not be content until you have allowed something of that wistful beauty to drift into a garden and shrine of your own. You must pay in prayer for what you receive in vacancy. For the prayer of a creator begins with the tireless adventure of a quest and ends in the worship of contemplation. And the whole object of prayer is to attract by making room for that which you desire to attain, which is nothing less than the Greek ' possession for ever ' ; life in a form that will endure, that is yours beyond the survival of each transitory state. And vacancy is the Chinese doctrine of The Vacuum.

' Lao Tzŭ,' says Okakura, ' claimed that only in vacuum lay the truly essential. The reality of a room, for instance, was to be found in the vacant space enclosed by the roof and walls themselves.

The usefulness of a water pitcher dwelt in the emptiness where water might be put, not in the form of the pitcher or the material of which it is made. Vacuum is all-potent because all-containing. In vacuum alone motion becomes possible. One who could make of himself a vacuum into which others might enter would become master of all situations. The whole can always dominate the part.'

Thus the supreme act of the creator is the creation of himself as a vacuum. It is an act of utter self-surrender, a gesture of absolute humility, and a final renunciation of conquest and personal achievement. Those who have read Sir J. A. Thomson's recent presidential address in his section of the British Association find therein the tribute of a great modern scientist to this ancient Chinese doctrine. For he confesses that during a lifetime devoted to original research the solutions of his most difficult problems have come to him when he had emptied his mind of all problems and let it remain vacant. Yet the power of observation is never absent because it is as a microcosm of the Creator Himself that man broods over his own void. And all we surrender is the conscious struggle of conception to a greater power than that of consciousness, the sceptre of a normal self-conscious personality into the hands of the subliminal self. And a leader-writer of *The Times* has put the ultimate issue in words that deserve to be remembered :

'For great thoughts to rise out of the subliminal self over the threshold of consciousness it is necessary not only that there should be a vacant mind *but*

*a subconscious mind rich in great thoughts.* That is just where most of us are lacking, and that is what differentiates us from Archimedes and Newton and Faraday. When with soft music and sweet odours we have produced the vacant mind, vacant it remains with the vacuity of an abyss.'

Yet it would be absurd, of course, to suggest that because we may never become an Archimedes, or a Newton, or a Faraday we should therefore give up the struggle which ends in self-surrender and revelation. All the writer is asking us to consider is whether we are truly co-workers in the divine transformation of a transient world or merely drifting dilettanti who use ideas and the brief emotions they inspire as a means of delighting their empty hearts. For ideas and the imagination which begets them are of greater service in the world of to-day than all the conferences of the experts. We need to get back to that clearer and wider vision which saw the way of Life as the way of Creation, and the adventure of Life as the co-adventure of the Human and Divine. The attainment of lasting peace does not rest with a League of Nations ; justice between man and man is not to be sought for in any rigid political or economic system ; the Kingdom of Heaven on Earth lies off the theologian's map. All these things we hold so good and so desirable are incidental, to be found by those who seek them not, the wayside achievements of those whose goal is elsewhere, whose Kingdom is not of this world.

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